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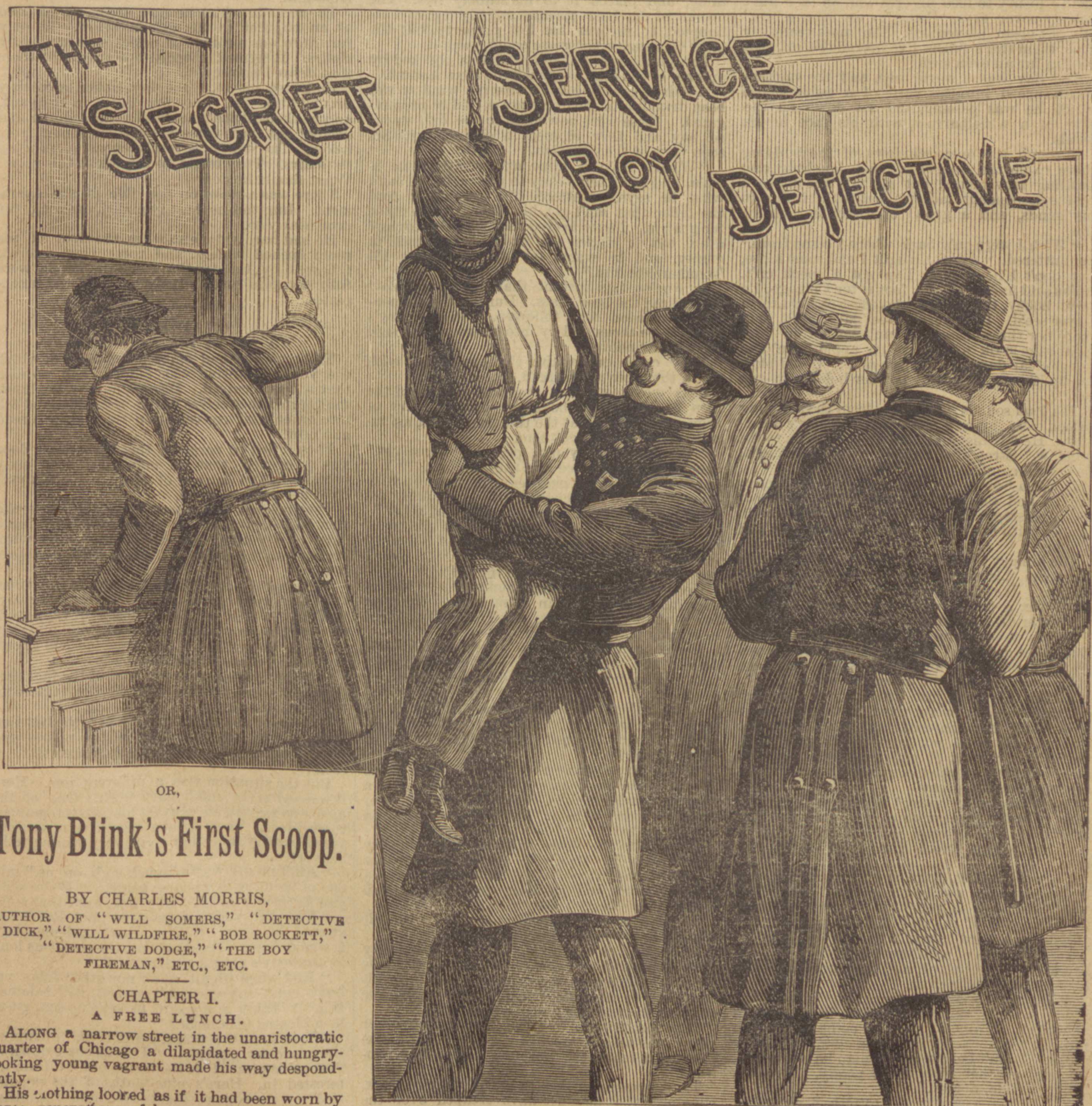
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OR,

Tony Blink's First Scoop.

BY CHARLES MORRIS,
AUTHOR OF "WILL SOMERS," "DETECTIVE
DICK," "WILL WILDFIRE," "BOB ROCKETT,"
"DETECTIVE DODGE," "THE BOY
FIREMAN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. A FREE LUNCH.

ALONG a narrow street in the unaristocratic
quarter of Chicago a dilapidated and hungry-
looking young vagrant made his way despond-
ently.

His clothing looked as if it had been worn by
three generations of beggars, and then thrown
away, to be picked up by its present possessor.

ONE OF THE OFFICERS DASHED TO THE SUSPENDED BOY, FLUNG HIS ARMS AROUND HIM,
AND LIFTED HIM SO AS TO TAKE THE STRAIN OF THE ROPE OFF HIS NECK.

His face was thin and haggard, as if he had gone for a week without food. He staggered, like one weak from hunger.

He was a very young personage to be thus thrown out upon the world—to all appearance not more than sixteen years of age.

Yet hard rubbing against the world had evidently sharpened his wits, and there was a look in the boy's black eyes, and a general set to his features, which showed that he had the wide-awake brain of the genuine street Arab.

Men, and boys too, grow old fast in the bitter school of poverty. Their education is not what would be called a liberal one, but it is one that fits them for the daily concerns of life, and the ragged youngster in whom we are now interested evidently knew more of the art of making a living out of nothing, and of getting into and out of tight places, by the aid of his wits alone, than many men of twice his age.

He talked to himself in a sort of growling and angry murmur as he wended his way slowly along.

"This thing's jist 'bout played out," he grumbly remarked. "Things ain't got up square nohow. Yere's clothes 'nough hangin' round fer a whole school full o' fellers, and I ain't got 'nough on me ter dress a monkey. An ther's grub a-plenty to feed all creation, an ther ain't nobody never says, 'Come in an take a bite.' It's jist clean played out. I'm 'most ready ter j'ine them there fellers I've heered tell on, that goes in fur an even swop."

The day was a warm one, and the vagrant youth turned into the yard of a public house which he was passing, and sat down on the edge of a wheelbarrow, with his face in his hands.

Through the open windows of the building there came the sounds of loud laughter and bustling movements, but all this was unheard by the despondent lad, who sat with his face in his hands, and a growl of discontent on his lips.

"Wish I were on'y back where I come from," he muttered. "Allers thought I had some sense, but don't b'lieve now I've got a speck on't. Folks said as how, if I'd foot it ter Chicago, I'd be all hokey, but it's the playedest-out old town I ever see'd. Been yere three days, ain't arnt more nor three cents, and ain't eat nothin' 'cept a cabbage-stalk and a rotten apple. An' I'm holler clear down to my toe-nails. Could blow me up 'thout drillin' any powder-holes, now you bet."

The loud sounds that came from the drinking saloon close by now attracted the boy's attention. He left his seat and stole close up to the window. Stretching himself, to his full hight, he peeped cautiously in.

It was a beer house, of a low grade of respectability, and pretty well filled with a throng of men of disreputable aspect, many of them well-primed with liquor, to judge by their talk and manner.

The hungry little tramp looked curiously into the room, his sharp eyes taking in its every feature. Just inside the window by which he stood was a table, round which sat a group of the better-dressed inmates of the saloon.

Before them were glasses of foaming beer. But, what attracted the boy's attention was a plate-full of bread and meat, which had been placed on the table just under the window.

On this his eyes, just lifted above the edge of the window, were fixed with the intent gaze which the charmed bird fixes upon the serpent. He could not remove his eyes from that food for want of which he was starving, and his fingers worked convulsively in the fury of uncontrollable desire.

"I's allers been honest," he muttered, to himself. "Never stole nothin' yit. But that thar grub'd find mighty open house in my stomjack. An' them chaps look 's if they was stuffed full, now."

The men, in fact, were paying no attention to their provender, nor to the pair of eyes which were fixed on it so greedily. They were listening to the talk of the throng in the saloon, and putting in a word here and there themselves.

This talk was of a different kind from any the listener had overheard, and it struck him as interesting and suggestive.

"The world's got up wrong, and always has been," said one thin-faced fellow, in the tone of an orator. "No man's got a right to be born into the world except he's got a claim to his fair share. I don't believe in one man having a million and another man not a penny. It isn't a square divide, nohow."

"Them's my sentiments exactly," remarked one of the men at the table, who looked as if he had never been hungry in his life.

"Blowin's cheap," answered a tipsy fellow, resting a hand on the table to support his unsteady legs. "Here's you chaps as go in fur a divide, with your lashin's o' meat and beer, an' you never ax a poor old coon like me, as ain't got none, to peg in fur snacks."

"You! You guzzling beat," retorted the other, contemptuously. "You've swallowed yours, and have got it in your legs and your tongue now. You want all yours and half of ours, I reckon."

"Jist dry up on that," rejoined the tipsy fellow. "The poor is allers swallerin' theirn, and the rich is keepin' theirn, and then there's a howl. Don't come preachin' to this coon! Why don't you hunt up some hungry dude and guv him half that grub? Ain't no use havin' principles, if yer don't have 'em clean down to yer boots."

"I'm always ready to live up to my principles," answered the man at the table, with a show of pious benevolence. "Show me the person that is hungrier than me, and I'll give him his share of my food."

"Here's somebody that's thirstier," answered the tipsy fellow. "Guess I'll keep you to yer principles."

He snatched a full glass of beer from the table, and placed it to his stubby lips. The owner of the beer sprung angrily up, and attempted to recover his lost property, but the glass was empty before he could reach it.

The loud laugh that followed was checked by another event that happened the next instant.

A pair of greedy ears outside the window had been drinking in the doctrines so glibly promulgated. These were new ideas to the half-starved boy, and they chimed in exactly with his then view of the situation.

"What's his'n is mine, and what's mine is his'n, and he's allers ready to go snacks. That's what he says," muttered the listener. "And the feller that ain't got his sheer is got a right ter grab it. Never heered that sort o' preachin' afore, but it kinder fits in. He's full and I'm empty, and he wants ter divide. Guess I'll 'commerdate him."

It was at this instant that the tipsy fellow had seized the beer glass. During the momentary confusion that followed, both the boy's hands were thrust boldly into the room, through the open window.

They came out again, the one filled with meat, the other with bread.

This movement was observed by one of the men at the table, who gave vent to a cry of rage, and snatched at the thievish hands, an instant too late to catch them.

"It's jist what you're preachin' yerselves," came a youthful voice into the window. "Yer jist said as ther rich oughter swop even up with ther poor, and as yer wanted ter come across some feller hungrier than you, I'm that feller."

"There's a thief out there!" cried the man, instantly forgetting his doctrine of equality when it was applied to himself. "I'll teach him something if I can catch the rascal."

He sprang on the table, kicking over the remaining glass of beer in doing so, and flung up the window to its full hight. The next moment he sprang out.

His companions, no less angry, ran for the door of the saloon, furious against the daring fellow who had put their own principles into practice.

In the saloon the incident was differently received. Some angrily ran out to help the pursuers. Others laughed derisively. The tipsy fellow remarked:

"Tain't a good rule as don't work both ways. This swoppin' up bizness jist suits me. It's a rascally shame, though, that feller kicked over that other glass o' beer. Never like ter see good vittals wasted."

Meanwhile the chase outside was not very successful. The man who leaped through the window came to grief. His foot descended on a slippery stone, and he went sprawling at full length on his face.

The boy had already darted away with his snatched provender, eating as he went.

He took quick advantage of the opportunity which the accident gave him, and by the time his badly-shaken-up pursuer had regained his feet, and the others had made their way by the street to the yard, he had disappeared.

They sought him in vain. Though no other outlet was visible, except by a climb over a six-foot high fence, the boy had completely vanished.

The pursuers at length went angrily back, convinced that he must have escaped over the fence.

By the curses to which they gave vent it was

evident that the doctrine of equal division was just then at a discount. It had been applied from the wrong end.

But we must leave them to swallow their rage and follow the young vagabond.

No one could blame him much that, with his defective religious education, and his overpowering hunger, he had obeyed the impulse given him by the talk he had overheard, and helped himself to the food he so sadly needed.

But he had not gone over the fence, as they fancied.

In his weak state such a feat would have been impossible to him.

He had, on the contrary, darted through an open door into the kitchen—then, fortunately, empty. This had led him to a hall, from which passed upward a flight of stairs.

Hearing an approaching step he ran hastily up these stairs, and into a room whose door stood a crack open, at their head.

Only then did he stop to consider the situation. His hands still held the food he had snatched, with the exception of what he had already eaten, and he proceeded to devour the remainder with such ravenous haste as to nearly choke himself. Whatever else might happen he was determined that none of it should be taken from him.

The room in which he now was seemed used as an adjunct to the saloon below. Its only furniture was a couple of tables surrounded by chairs. It seemed intended for the use of those that desired privacy.

Finishing his food the boy looked anxiously around him. All was now quiet in the yard, and he thought that he might steal down and escape; but there came a startling sound from below. The steps of several men were ascending the stairs. They might be coming to this room! What should he do?

There was a closet on one side of the apartment. Into this he hastily glided, drawing the door nearly to.

He had hardly done so when the door of the room opened widely, and three men entered, followed by the landlord, whose hands were fully occupied with glasses of beer and lunch-plates.

CHAPTER II.

A DEN OF KILKENNY CATS.

THE men who had entered the room in which the young fugitive was hidden, had no idea that it was occupied. Dismissing the landlord, they seated themselves round the table, and fell into an earnest conversation over their bread and beer.

They failed to perceive that the closet door slowly opened, that an uncombed head slyly protruded, and a pair of sparkling black eyes fixed keenly upon them.

This incident took place after the conversation had continued for some time. Taking a close observation, the small head was withdrawn into the closet, and shook with disapprobation.

"I've see'd better-lookin' coves in my time, an' I ain't very old, neither," muttered the boy. "Wouldn't like ter lay a dozen o' eggs afore them fellers, fur fear they'd suck 'em, and only leave me the shells. I bet some on 'em knows the taste o' State Prison grub."

Ignorant of this comment and of the fact that they had a listener, the men at the table continued their talk.

It was but an echo of that which the boy had heard below, the old story of the rights and wrongs of labor, and of the unbalanced state of society.

But the situation was a different one. Here it seemed to be missionary work. One of the men was seeking to convert his two companions to his ideas. These ideas appeared to meet their views exactly, and they were very willing to be converted.

"Ain't no use wastin' much gab on us," said one of them, with a hoarse laugh. "We're with you in them 'pinions. Hey, Joe, ain't that so?"

"You bet your prettiest on that, Bill!" answered the other. "What this gentleman says is sound logic. Even-up's my doctrine—as long as anybody's got more than me."

"And when we git more nor other folks, nobody can't say we don't spread it," rejoined Bill. "Tain't in my skin to save up and git to be a bloated bondholder."

"That's not the point, gentlemen," answered the anarchist, gravely. "Let us come down to first principles. It is the rights of man I am interested in. Here's nine-tenths of the population on the edge of starvation, and the other tenth have got in their hands the money that belongs to all the world. Do you not agree

with me that this is a crying evil—a distressing outrage?"

"Sartain we do," answered Bill.

"I allers had jist sich sentiments," chimed in Joe, as he half-emptied his glass at a single draught.

The anarchist missionary lowered his tone, and looked heedfully about him.

"I have an idea there will be a lively time in this city before a month, he cautiously remarked. "All good and true men like you should take part. Listen to me, gentlemen."

He proceeded to divulge a series of matters connected with the disturbed state of affairs in Chicago. What he said we need not repeat, as it has no immediate connection with our story.

"Are you with me, gentlemen?" he concluded. "Can I depend upon you?"

"Right from the shoulder!" answered Joe, in a tipsy tone. "Whole hog or none, that's me. Give us your hand, boss."

Bill seized the other hand of the revolutionist agitator, and for several minutes the three stood up shaking hands across the table.

After a few words more of warning and advice, the speaker left the room, on the plea of other business.

The two men left behind stood looking at one another across the table, with a leer of deep meaning on their evil faces.

They did not perceive the boyish head again protruded through the closet door, and fixed keenly upon them.

The spy saw before him two roughly-dressed fellows, low-browed and coarse of feature, who looked as if rum and crime had made up the measure of their lives.

They differed greatly from the man who had just left them, who was a thin-faced, fanatical-looking fellow, evidently of foreign birth, with a mind that seemed to be divided between cunning and craziness.

A hoarse laugh broke from the two men together.

"What do you think o' that, Bill?"

"Rum papers, Joe."

"If he knowed we was only a pair o' jail-birds, I'm feard he'd scoot."

"He'd fly the track," answered Bill, shaking his head, meaningly.

"Then we've got to let *that* lay low. Tell you what. I've got a notion ther's goin' to be chances fur work here in Chicago."

"While these crazy fools is cuttin' up their didoes, it's queer if we can't do a little reg'lar business."

"Sly boots has got sly fingers," answered Joe. "Take keer that cat don't git out. Here's to luck."

"And plenty of it."

They snatched up their glasses, and drank this toast with leering faces.

Suddenly Bill turned, with a look of fierce passion on his hardened countenance, and, raising his arm, he flung his glass with a savage aim.

It struck the wall near the closet door, and was shivered to atoms.

"What the deuce is that for?"

"A rat! A rat!" Bill answered, as he ran furiously across the room. "They've laid a spy on us! I'll teach the hound a lesson he won't soon forget!"

In a moment more he had flung the closet door wide open, made a quick clutch within, and dragged the lurking boy out by the hair of his head.

Joe looked on with an expression that quickly changed from surprise to brutal ferocity.

"Spyin' on us, is he, the devil's imp? And heerd what we just said? We've got to salt him down, Bill."

The young prisoner, whose protruded head had exposed him, kicked, squirmed and yelled, but his captor had knotted his fingers in the boy's mop of hair, and held on grimly.

He lifted him from the floor, in fact, by the hair, until the two faces were opposite and nearly touching.

There was a ferocious meaning in the countenance of the villainous captor, as he glared like a tiger on his captive.

"Shall I choke the life out o' him, Joe? Or toss him out the window?"

"Le' me go! le' me go!" screamed the lad. "I ain't done nothin', and don't know nothin'! Jist you drap me. 'Cause it hurts like fun, mister!"

"Drop you!" roared Joe, seizing him by the nape of the neck. "You ragged brat of a spy! We'll drop you arter we've made mincemeat of your carcass."

They looked furious enough with rage to put their threats into execution, but the uproar they

had made, and their prisoner's howls of fear and pain, had roused the people in the saloon below, and a dozen of them now came crowding into the room.

Anxious voices inquired what was the matter. "A spy's the matter!" yelled Bill. "Arter we've settled his hash we'll settle that landlord who put him inter the closet."

"It's false! I never saw him before!" cried the irate landlord. "Hand him over to me. I'll teach him something!"

"It is the street rat who stole our lunch!" yelled another voice. "Hand him here. It is our turn first."

The case looked desperate for the captive amid all these clutching hands. The landlord seized his arm. The men who had lost their lunch grasped his two legs. Bill still clutched his hair. Joe had him by the neck and the other arm.

For the moment it looked as if he would be torn to pieces between these contending forces. He yelled, squirmed and kicked, jerking his assailants about with a strength that did not appear to reside in his diminutive body.

Yet all his efforts, and all the power of his lungs, would have been of little avail but for a fortunate accident that set his cursing and infuriated captors at odds.

In the boy's squirming, he brought his toe, with an ugly kick, under the chin of one of his assailants.

The latter did not see where the blow came from, and hastily concluding that he had been struck by the landlord, in a furious rage he dealt a swiping stroke across the mouth and eyes of the latter.

Half-blinded, and not knowing who had assailed him, the irate beer-seller released the arm of the captive, and struck out wildly with both his burly fists.

As it happened, one of them took Bill in the ear, while the other descended heavily on Joe's right eye.

Here was a free fight suddenly inaugurated. The surprised and infuriated scoundrels dropped their prisoner without hesitation, and dashed forward, striking furiously to right and left, not knowing or caring, in their fury, on whom their blows fell.

The landlord, taken between the eyes by Bill's hard fist, went down like a log to the floor. Joe's blow fell on the nose of the only man who still retained a hold on the prisoner, and brought the claret profusely from that swollen organ.

This fellow retaliated, and in a moment blows were falling thick and fast in all directions, several of the surrounding crowd receiving and returning their quota.

Meanwhile the innocent cause of this hot fracas dropped unnoticed to the floor, hastened to crawl between the legs of his assailants, who were too busy to pay any attention to him, and rose to his feet near the table.

A portion of the lunch which had been placed there still remained. The sight was too much for the hungry lad's nerves. Giving up his desire to escape he fell furiously upon the provender, and swallowed it with wild haste, while his late assailants had forgotten all about him in their anxiety to pummel each other.

Finishing the food to the last morsel the boy sought to work his way around by the wall to the door. But the fight had brought up the remaining inmates of the saloon, and the doorway was filled with an impassable crowd.

His next movement was toward the window. This he safely reached. There was a shed below—the roof of the kitchen. This led downward at a slope until within ten feet of the ground.

The fugitive, with a glad sensation at his heart, swung himself out to the roof, and then turned and looked back on the fight, which was still furiously progressing.

Two or three of the combatants were stretched upon the floor. Others were hitting right and left with undiminished vigor. Swollen eyes and bleeding noses appeared everywhere. Half the inmates of the room had been drawn into the row.

A scream of laughter broke from the boy's lips.

"Let her rip! Go it, you beggars! Never see'd sich fun in my born days!" he yelled. "There goes another! Ain't it jolly papers, though? Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

These cries attracted the attention of Bill, who had drawn back a step from the fight, a good deal the worse for wear.

"Hello, fellows!" he cried. "While we're fightin' like fools, the spy's givin' us the go-by. There he goes! Catch him, somebody!" He made a plunge toward the open window.

"Catch a weasel asleep," answered the boy, fixing his thumb in derision to his nose, and waving his fingers in the air. "Never see'd sich a jolly row. Good-by! Send word when you want me to call ag'in."

He ran hastily down the shed, and jumped to the ground below, leaving his pursuer furious with impotent rage.

CHAPTER III.

A RISING STAR.

SEVERAL days have passed since the date of the events described in our last chapter. Seated on a Chicago curbstone is the boy, Tony Blink, whom we have already introduced to the reader, but whom we must now present under his real name.

A change has come over Tony since we saw him, in rags and vagrancy, escaping from his foes through a second-story window.

He seems to have been in luck, for his rags are gone, and he is dressed in a whole and respectable suit of clothes.

And he holds in his hands a pie, which once was whole, but which has grown very ragged under his active teeth.

Little does it disturb Tony that the street in which he sits is a busy one, long lines of wagons rattling over the cartway, and hundreds of persons hurrying along the pavement.

Heedless of them all he sits on his curbstone, with his back against a lamp-post, and gnaws away at his pie as cool as if he were in the middle of a prairie.

And as he sits there, like a small pattern of the "Great American Pie-Biter," a series of thoughts run through his brain, which we must translate into speech for the benefit of the reader.

"Ain't no use talking," he says to himself, "but this yere Chicago's beginnin' to pan out lively. Thought it was a broken-down slow-goer, I did; but I reckon it's a whole team, and I'm the little dog under the wagon. Jist let's go over my note-book, and see what I've got writ down."

"First—arter I pegged away from them there anarchist coons, I went ter ther police office and tried ter tell 'em what sort o' thunder was goin' ter break loose. All I got for't was, a big hunk tuk me by ther ear and ax'd me out inter ther street with his boot under my coat-tail. Didn't want no more o' *that* there garlic, he said, and I'd best git 'fore ther moskeeters cum round."

"I tell yer that put me kinder down in ther gills. But, jist arterwards I struck on them high-flyers, Bill and Joe. An' there I sorter had the whip hand—for ther' was a big perlicer jist close by, an' they were afeard ter say beans. You bet I went fur 'em lively. Told 'em I twigg'd ther caboodle, an' I'd blow the whole game inter splinters if they didn't pony up."

"You never see'd sich skeered rabbits. Reckon they was 'feard the perlice mcught know ther' pretty faces. Anyhow, the chap as calls hisself Bill took me inter a sloop-shop and rigged me out so spruce that I hardly knowed myself."

Tony looked down on his new clothes with eyes that sparkled with satisfaction. He took the last bite at his pie, and resumed his meditation.

"And Joe, he treated me to ice cream and cake, and planked a five-dollar bill in my vest-pocket."

"Hope ther's some more o' them there angels afloat. All I 'gaged to do is to keep shady on what I heered. But I didn't say as I wouldn't fling salt on their tails if I cotched 'em at any gum-game. And you kin bet yer bottom dollar I'm goin' to keep my eye skinned."

"I come to this yere town with nothin' but a slice o' bread and butter, to seek my fortin; an' I reckon ther's openin's for a lively chap as ain't too proud to be honest."

Tony's pie had all disappeared. He looked with regret at his empty fingers, leaned back against his lamp-post with the air of a lord, and gazed at the teamsters in the street as if he fancied they were all working for him, and helping to pile up his fortune.

In a few minutes the happy vagrant was fast asleep. The tide of life flowed by for hours without paying any heed to him. Night was coming over the city, and he still slept on.

Dusk was thickening, and the lights of the city were beginning to gleam out one by one, when a small party of bootblacks discovered Tony still slumbering, and began a series of petty tricks on the unconscious boy.

One adorned his hat with a bunch of muddy feathers, which he found in the gutter. Another, without wakening the sleeper, painted on

his face a pair of ferocious eyebrows, and adorned his chin and upper lip with whiskers and mustache—all in blacking.

This done, the vagabonds stood off and surveyed their handiwork with immense satisfaction.

"Ain't he a jolly little 'possum?" cried one. "How'll we fix him next? Let's set off a pack o' fire-crackers inside his trowsers' legs."

"Who's got any, I'd like ter know? Or any money to buy any?"

"Maybe Country has. Go through his pockets, Jake. If he's got any spondulicks, we'll get the crackers, and divide the balance even up."

Jake, the biggest and most mischievous of the vagabonds, approached Tony for the purpose of carrying out this scheme.

But he was checked in his thievish effort by a harsh voice from above him.

"What are you after, you blamed gutter-rats? Let the boy alone, or I'll give some of you a headache with my ladder."

It was the lamplighter, who was perched on his short ladder, lighting the gas above Tony's head.

Descending, he stirred the sleeping boy roughly with his foot.

"Wake up there, Greeny," he cried. "Might as well go to sleep in a hornets' nest as among a lot of devil's wasps like these."

Tony stirred, rubbed his eyes, and looked out rather stupidly on the group of grinning urchins before him. He rose on his feet, and faced the one called Jake, a fellow as big as himself.

This boy was laughing and making a variety of derisive motions.

"What's up?" asked Tony of the lamplighter.

"What's these fellows been at?"

"Frescoing you a bit," laughed the lamplighter, as he caught his first glimpse of Tony's face.

"They have, hey?" he cried in sudden anger. "Been playin' their gum-games on me, have they? Cotched a weasel asleep, did they? Guess I'll have ter let 'em know that I'm wide-awake now."

In an instant his fist was dashed out into the face of the grinning urchin before him. The latter, taken by surprise, toppled back as if he had been kicked by a mule, and went headlong to the ground, bringing two of his smaller companions with him.

"Come round ter my house ag'in, when you want some more fun," said Tony, walking away as self-possessed as if this was his ordinary exercise.

"He's a cool one!" remarked the lamplighter, with another laugh, as he shouldered his ladder, and walked on.

Tony's one outburst settled his antagonists. He had expected that they would follow him, and that he would have to fight the whole party, but he was not molested. Jake's head had come so hard against a stone as to stun him, and his smaller companions were awed by the unexpected prowess of their victim.

By the time Jake recovered his senses Tony was out of sight.

He walked on, unaware of the way in which his face had been disfigured. It was now too dark for him to be much noticed, though several persons laughed as they passed him.

Wondering what ailed them Tony strolled on for an hour or two, not decided where to go or what to do.

The boy was quite unaware of the fact that he had been followed. Full of satisfaction at his success in the last few days, and at the lesson he had just given the bootblacks, he continued his walk, looking comical enough with his muddy plume and his imitation whiskers and mustache.

It had now grown quite dark, and the part of the city into which he had wandered was very poorly lighted, so that he failed to perceive that two pairs of evil eyes were fixed threateningly upon him.

Yet two men had watched him during all the time he slept on the curbstone, had seen the episode we have just related, and had closely followed the gamin in his subsequent stroll.

One of them now slipped ahead, taking the opposite side of the street. Quickly crossing over again he glided into the entrance of a dark alley. The other closed up on the unconscious boy.

Suddenly a hand caught Tony by the shoulder, and jerked him violently into the alley, while another hand clutched him from behind and pushed him forward. At the same instant a sticky substance was plastered across his mouth, suppressing the cry for help which he was on the point of uttering.

He was pushed and jostled onward, vainly struggling in the hands of his captors.

"Keep quiet, you wifit, or you'll git hurt!" warned one.

Tony struggled more vigorously than ever, on this admonition.

"Guv him a settler," growled another voice, which was familiar to the boy's ears. "Let him have it heavy, or he'll give us trouble."

The blow of a hard fist took the young captive behind the ear, delivered with such force that he was lifted bodily from his feet and dashed against the wall at the side of the alley.

He fell like a stone to the ground, stunned and helpless.

"That'll settle his hash," said one of the captors. "He's dead as a sack o' potatoes. You hit too hard, Bill. We'll have to carry the youngster now."

"I didn't know he was made o' calf's foot jelly," was the growling answer. "A tap like that oughtn't ter kill a mouse."

The unconscious boy was lifted in their strong arms and carried onward through the darkness, as lifeless to all intents and purposes as though he had actually ceased to breathe.

The villains, with their helpless burden, disappeared from that locality, and all then fell into utter silence again.

An abduction—perhaps a murder—had taken place in the heart of a great city, and not a soul beyond the actors was aware that anything unusual had occurred. It was one of the many mysteries of life in a metropolis.

How long a period elapsed ere Tony came to life again he could not have told. When he did so, it was some time before he could appreciate the situation. He had entirely forgotten what had passed, and his brain buzzed as if a hive of bees had settled there.

He attempted to move, but found it impossible to do so. Something, he did not know what, confined his hands and feet. All was dark around him, and he felt half-smothered, as if he was being choked.

He had his tongue yet, however, and was on the point of making an exclamation, when the sound of voices near by admonished him to keep still and listen.

The tones came to him muffled, as if they had passed through some obstacle. It was not long, indeed, before Tony was wide awake enough to discover that he was tied hand and foot, and that a heavy cloth of some kind had been flung over him.

How he had got there, or what had happened to him, was as yet a mystery to his dazed brain. He listened intently, hoping to learn something from the speakers.

"Pass that bottle," came from one hoarse voice. "Ye're keepin' it to yerself longer nor's good fer you."

"Blast the bottle," growled another. "Ye're allers thinkin' o' drink. Can't yer come down to bizness, like a man?"

"Dry up, Bill! Ye're too tonguey, consid'able. Strikes me as I've got a right to wet my whistle, as well's you."

"You kin swaller rank p'isen, fer all I keer. But, how's about that crib? Ther's goin' to be lively times in this yere town afore long, if I know beans, and we've got to use our opportunities."

A guzzling sound was heard for a moment, followed by a sigh of satisfaction, as if the other speaker had been paying his respects to the bottle. Then he remarked, in a juicy voice:

"S'pose I don't see that? But we've got to mind what the cap'n says. It's him that's ter lay out the work, and as that's ter do it, and what's the use gettin' inter a conniption fit 'bout nothin'?"

"The cap'n he fizzled! Jist show me an openin' of my own, and you'll see if I wait fer orders."

By this time Tony was wide awake, and had all his wits about him. He remembered his late adventure, and recognized the voices of the speakers. They were the two State's-Prison birds whom he had worked so neatly a few days before.

Just as things looked now, however, Tony was not quite so sure of his smartness. He had let himself fall into the hands of the villains, and the future was anything but rose-colored before him.

"Can't kick myself, kaze I'm tied up like a bag o' 'taters," said the boy to himself. "And I wouldn't like ter hire a mule ter kick me, fur fear ther mightn't be nothin' left but a trowsers' button. But I'll never git to be President of these United States if I ain't kicked by somebody, kaze ther's no other way o' gettin' my senses back inter my cranium. Anyhow I got ter lie low and keep shady."

The conversation outside continued, and the boy learned what he had only vaguely suspected before, that the business of his captors was burglary, and that they were in Chicago for the purpose of taking advantage of the expected troubles for working their "business."

He gained other information of importance. The allusion to the "cap'n" was by other hints, which taught him that these men were members of an organized gang of burglars, who had come to Chicago with criminal intent.

He remembered hearing of several burglaries which had recently taken place, and that the police were trying to work their way to the track of the rascals. To this, however, he had paid little attention; but now it became very important to him.

"S'pose they think I'm asleep," he said to himself. "If they knowed I was a-listenin' they'd bu'st my b'iler, sure."

The silent reflections of the prisoner were brought to an end by a new event, which seriously changed the situation of affairs. The pair of burglars indicated by their words that some one was approaching, and in a minute afterward the door of the room opened.

By the sound of footsteps on the uncarpeted floor, Tony judged that three or four men had entered.

To his alarm the conversation, after some rough words of greeting, turned upon him.

"Of course we 'beyed orders," came in Bill's coarse tones. "We nabbed the little jokel slick as grease. He dropped inter our fingers like a turnip inter a hog's mouth."

This was in response to a question from one of the new-comers.

"He's under that thar cloth," supplied Bill. "We spliced him up, though I reckon 'tweren't o' much use, fur a little love-tap I guv him kinder put the youngster to sleep."

"You haven't killed him?"

"Nary time. That sort ain't killed easy."

"Let me see him."

The next instant Tony felt the covering jerked off of his body. It was a perilous moment, and he felt the necessity of "playing 'possum" to the best of his ability.

What the burglars saw was a boy tied hand and foot, stretched out at full length on the floor, his face pale, except where it was disfigured by dirt and boot-blackening, and as motionless as if he was still insensible.

He felt the warmth of a candle on his face, and knew that some one was leaning over and examining him attentively. But, not a muscle quivered, and he forced himself to breathe slowly and faintly.

"I reckon he'll do," said the observer. "He's got as much life in him yet as a cat, but he hasn't come back to his senses. You must have hit the youngster hard, Bill."

"I s'pose I struck out lively; 'cause I was a bit aggravated. Hang the kid! he must ha' got it in a tender spot, ter lay him out this way."

Paying no further attention to their prisoner, the men returned to the table, and began a conversation on business subjects.

But the cloth was not replaced over Tony, and he felt it necessary to be very cautious. He could not tell but that some of these men might be watching him.

The talk turned to the same subjects which he had before overheard, and several schemes of burglary were debated.

Tony listened with the utmost intentness. The situation of some of the places was given, the amount of plunder to be obtained mentioned, and methods of operation discussed.

The information that came to him was important but dangerous. He shuddered slightly as he thought of the consequences if these men should suspect him of overhearing them.

With an uncontrollable desire to see the men surrounding him, he lifted one eyelid sufficiently to catch a glimpse of some of their faces.

The attempt proved a fatal one. The next instant a loud oath broke from the lips of one of the men, and a full glass of beer was dashed into Tony's face, surprising him so that he involuntarily sought to spring to his feet.

He partly rose, and then fell heavily to the floor, half stunning himself again as his head struck the hard boards.

"The dog's been playing it on us!" cried the man, who had flung the beer. "I saw his eyelid quiver. Wake up, you rat! Your game's up."

A heavy kick fell on Tony's body, rolling him over, and adding to the disorder of his senses.

When he regained full consciousness he found that his eyes had been bandaged, and that his captors were discussing what had best be done with him.

"He played it on you before, and he'll do it again," remarked the one whom Tony surmised to be the "captain." "The youngster's a cute into cuss, and we'll get trouble if we don't settle his bash."

"That's been my notion from the first," rejoined Joe. "Only Bill's too tender-hearted I'd a' scragged him afore now."

"Didn't want to hurt the youngster, 'cept it was necessary," apologized Bill.

"Well, it's necessary now. He must go under. There's a rope and a hook. A word to the wise is sufficient."

These words thoroughly alarmed the young captive. He judged they were about to hang him, and a shudder of dread ran through his frame.

A strong hand caught him by the collar, and lifted him to his feet.

"Le' me go!" he pleaded earnestly. "I ain't heered nothin', and don't know nothin'. Le' me go, and I won't never whimper 'bout it."

No heed was paid to his words, but the noose of a rope was dropped over his head, and fell around his neck. There was the sensation of death in it to the boy, and a wild yell of alarm came to his lips as he struggled as well as he was able with his captors.

"Stop the rascal's pipes! He'll rouse the town!" thundered the captain.

The end of the cloth was quickly thrown over Tony's head, and secured around his mouth and chin, but not until he had given vent to another shrill scream of alarm and despair.

"Now the hook! Fetch the rope through it. Heave away lively!"

The scrape of the rope through the hook was heard. The noose tightened around the throat of the unhappy boy. He felt himself lifted from his feet until only his toes touched the floor. Hope fled from his young heart.

"One more pull, and he swings free. Then fasten the rope and let him hang."

Despair settled down like a terrible cloud on the prisoner. Life had never seemed so sweet to him as at that moment in which he was about to lose it.

A few words of prayer trembled on his young lips, and he breathed farewell in his heart to the world.

He seemed to behold the figure of death, clutching at him like a terrible monster. One more pull on the rope, and his feet had left the floor. He hung suspended between earth and heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INS AND THE OUTS.

WHILE the events just described were taking place, other circumstances, of vital interest to our characters, were occurring in the streets of Chicago.

A half-dozen men, in citizen's dress, yet with a certain military precision in their walk, advanced briskly but silently until near the locality into which our story has taken us.

One of them seemed to act as leader or guide, and he stopped at length in front of a house somewhat larger and fresher in appearance than those surrounding it.

"This is the place," he briefly remarked.

"You know your duty, gentlemen. We are acting on a very doubtful statement, and must be sure our game is in the net before we try to bag it."

Without answering him, the party at once separated. Within a minute or two they had all apparently disappeared. But any one who had watched them would have perceived that they had simply taken up stations of concealment at various points around the house.

Whatever their object, it was evidently connected with the inmates of that residence, whose comings and goings were placed under strict guard.

A half hour passed. Then a second group of men came along the street. This party displayed none of the caution of the preceding. They were laughing and talking loudly, and seemed to be a mere party of midnight roysters.

Their hilarity ceased, however, when they reached the front of the house. While one of them advanced to and opened the door, the others looked cautiously around them, as if moved by a habit of watchfulness.

They saw nothing. The watchers were too well concealed to be easily observed. In a moment more the door was opened and the newcomers entered the house.

Hardly had the portal been closed behind them when a form appeared from the opening of an opposite alley. It was the guide of the preceding party, who hurried to the door and

stooped with his ear to the keyhole, as if with hope that the loud-talking party within might say something of interest to his ears.

If this was his design he was destined to disappointment. No sound of a voice came from within, and all he could make out was the faint echo of steps, which were already distant, and quickly sunk into silence.

He next cautiously tried the knob of the door. An instant sufficed to satisfy him that entrance was not easily to be had. The door was locked.

A series of manipulations succeeded, in which he seemed to be inserting keys and other instruments. No sound was audible. He was evidently an old hand at the business of unlocking doors without the proper keys.

He was thus engaged for fully ten minutes before a slight click gave evidence that something had yielded. Another turn of the handle and a push gave proof of success. The door yielded and opened.

Turning his head he emitted a low signal whistle. Immediately the forms of his companions darted from various localities and rapidly crossed toward him.

In a minute more they were all inside the house and the door closed again.

It was very dark within, not the faintest glimmer of light being visible.

"Not a word," whispered the leader. "Listen!"

A few minutes of absolute silence followed. From some distant locality, it was not easy to tell where, faint sounds came to their ears, as of voices and the shuffling of feet, but all too vague for anything to be made of them.

A scratching noise followed, and a bright point of flame burst out. The leader had struck a match.

He proceeded to light a small bull's-eye lantern, whose light he cast in various directions, illuminating the place in which they stood.

It proved to be the house entry, with a flight of stairs passing upward from its center, and the doors of rooms on the right and to the rear.

Attention was first paid to the room on the right. The door was opened and the beam of the lantern thrown within. It was evidently the parlor, but no person was there.

"Come," said the leader briefly.

He walked toward the door at the extremity of the passage, followed by the others. They moved with well-trained caution, their steps giving but a trace of sound.

Listening for an instant at the door, he opened it, and entered the room beyond. A dining-table and sideboard proved that it was used as a dining-room, while a further door beyond evidently opened to the kitchen.

His companions had followed him into the room, the door of which was partly closed, while they halted for a moment's conference.

"They are evidently up-stairs," he whispered. "We have a ticklish task before us, gentlemen. These may be honest folks, though I doubt it. But, if they are, we might get into trouble by going too far."

"Our information came from a good quarter," remarked another.

"Very true. Take a glimpse into that rear room, Morse. See if there is a back stairway."

As one of the men proceeded to obey this injunction the party was startled by bearing the front door open, and a step on the floor.

An exclamation of anger and suspicion followed.

"Blast their eyes, what's that door doing unlocked? 'Tain't like the captain a bit. It looks rascally dubious."

As he spoke he could be heard advancing, till his foot was on the stairs.

At this instant a most startling incident occurred. From some point in the upper part of the house there came a frightful scream, as of some one in mortal fear or agony.

It filled the house with its volume of sound, and extended far out into the surrounding space.

The man nearest the door of the dining-room was so shaken in his nerves as to fling the portal wide open, while the light of the lantern flashed out into the hall, and revealed the concealed party to the man on the stairs.

An oath broke from his bearded lips.

"Sold, by the hokey! Cops, or I'm a donkey! And what the blazes has broke loose up-stairs?"

As he spoke he ran briskly up the carpeted stairs, but had not taken many steps ere that despairing yell again rung through the house.

"The very deuce is to pay, somewhere!" cried the leader of the party, as he sprang hastily toward the hall. "Jack, you help Morse at the back stairs. The rest follow me."

Dashing rapidly along, he reached the stairs, and went up them with all haste, his comrades close on his heels.

The man in advance, however, had a good start of them. As their feet touched the first step they heard a door flung open above, and a loud cry of alarm.

"Cops!" came the word. "The house is full of them! Git, like smoke!"

A bustling sound came to the ears of those who were ascending the stairs. They heard a window flung open and the noise of many feet.

In less than a minute the police captain—for such he was—dashed through the open door of a well-lighted second-floor room. He was just in time to see the last man of its recent inmates leaping through an opposite window.

In default of any other weapon he flung the lantern he held with all his force at the head of the fugitive. It struck his hat and carried it off, but with a cry of derision he disappeared, with a sound as if he had lighted upon the roof of a shed below the window.

For an instant the pursuit was checked. The vision which the policemen beheld was so startling as to drive every other thought out of their heads. In the center of the well-lighted room appeared a frightful spectacle.

It was the form of a hanging boy.

His feet and hands were bound, his head enveloped in a cloth, the rope around his neck passed through the chandelier hook in the ceiling and its end secured on the knob of the middle door.

Was it too late for rescue? Was he dead? No, his body was writhing convulsively. They remembered the screams they had heard. They were doubtless from his voice.

"Who has a knife?" yelled the leader. "Cut him down instantly."

Without waiting for this order, one of the officers had dashed to the suspended boy, flung his arms around him, and lifted him so as to take the strain of the rope off his neck.

Meanwhile one or two more of the men, after their instant of surprise, dashed to the open window. The forms of several men were visible outside. A shed lay below, from which the last of the fugitives was just leaping to the ground.

One of the officers at the window drew his pistol and sent a bullet hastily after the flying group. Almost at the same instant a door was heard to open below, and a second pistol-report rung out on the air of the night.

A savage oath followed, a momentary struggle was heard, and then there came a heavy fall and a groan.

"To the rescue," called one of the men at the window. "The lads are in trouble below."

He sprang through the window to the shed roof, ran down it, and leaped to the ground below. Others of the officers followed.

The scene they beheld was not very encouraging. The fugitives had disappeared. One of the two officers left down-stairs lay on the brick pavement of the yard, dismally groaning.

The other was frantically trying to open the gate, through which the fugitives had evidently escaped, and fastened it behind them.

"Morse's got it heavy," he cried, still fumbling at the gate.

One of the men sprang like a cat at the top of the fence, caught it, drew himself up, and in a second more sprang down on the opposite side.

He kicked down the wooden bar which had been set against the gate to prevent its opening, and then ran hastily down the narrow alley to which it led. Some of the others quickly joined him.

Pursuit proved useless, however. The flying villains had made the best use of their precious minutes, and no trace of them was to be found. They evidently were thoroughly acquainted with all the ins and outs of that intricate part of the town, and had vanished into some neighboring place of refuge.

One man had remained by the groaning officer in the yard.

"What is it, Morse?" he demanded. "Where did you catch it? Did they knife you?"

"Side of the head," groaned the prostrate man. "Slung-shot or something. Lift me up, Joe. It hurts like blazes, but I guess it's only a scalp cut."

Meanwhile the two officers who had remained up-stairs were seeking to bring back the nearly defunct boy to his senses.

The manner in which the hanging had been performed had prevented any injury to his neck, and though he had been seriously choked, it had not lasted long enough for a serious result.

After a minute a groan came from his lips. He writhed on the floor as if in severe pain, and tried to lift his hands.

"He's all right," said one of the officers, drawing his knife, and cutting the bonds on the boy's hands and feet. "But, it was what I call a narrow squeak. One or two minutes more and I wouldn't have taken an insurance on his life."

The boy made instant use of his released hands to rub his throat, while, with an effort, he managed to sit upright.

The muffling cloth had been removed from his head, and he sat gazing with a white, scared face around him.

"Where am I?" he asked, feebly. "What's busted? Feel as if I'd been drawn through a one-inch knot-hole."

"You're all right, my little fellow. How do you feel? Does your neck hurt?"

"Kind o' scraggy," answered the boy. "Ain't goin' ter do it ag'in, be you? 'Twasn't my fault as I heard a bit o' what you was sayin'. Didn't hear much neither."

There was a hunted look in Tony's eyes as he turned them from face to face.

"Don't be afraid, youngster. We are your friends. Your enemies have gone. But we want to know all about it. How came you here? What is your name?"

"Tony Blink. The way I came here I was fetched here. I knowed too much and they went for me."

"What did you know? Who were these men?"

"Crib-breakers, they called themselves."

"I thought so. We are officers of the law, my lad, and we are here on information that this house is a den of burglars. Tell us all you know about them."

"Will arter while," answered Tony, rubbing his throat vigorously, and contorting his face with pain.

The officer drew a flask from his pocket, and poured some of its contents into the boy's mouth.

"That's better," said Tony. "That makes me feel kind o' spruce. Tell yer all about it now."

At this moment the remaining officers returned, with the story of their ill-luck, and Morse's hurt.

"Put the neighborhood under guard," ordered the leader. "They may show themselves again."

They all retired at this command, leaving him alone with Tony.

"Now, my boy; I don't want too many to hear your story. Go on and tell me what you know."

Tony proceeded to do so, detailing his whole experience with the burglars from his first adventure with Bill and Joe.

"This is very important information—highly important," said the officer, with satisfaction. "Those men will not carry out their plans now, since you have overheard them, but they will soon form new ones. As for you, Tony, you are a sharp and keen young detective. You have seen the faces of several of these men, and if you are willing, I would like to employ you in the search for them. You may prove a valuable aid to the police service of Chicago."

CHAPTER V.

HOW TONY TREED HIS GAME.

TONY BLINK was one of the busiest and most important urchins in Chicago. He had been appointed an amateur detective by the chief of police!

Just what "amateur" meant he did not know, any more than if it was so much Choctaw. But there was one thing he did understand: He was to be paid for anything he might learn of value to the police. And pay was just what Tony was after.

How was he to learn anything? That was the next question. But he had learned a great deal within the past week, and he fancied he was sharp enough to pick up other information.

He knew some of the ways of the burglars, and he knew some of them by sight. That was a good beginning. What they were up to was the next thing to be found out.

The officer had said that they would not return to any of their discovered haunts, and that they would give up the schemes he had overheard. But they would make new ones, and they could not change their faces. It was his business now to keep his eyes and ears wide open.

It was Sunday, the second of May. The city was quiet and peaceful. No sign of a disturb-

ing element anywhere appeared. The day before had been an exciting one, from the eight-hour labor strike, but all excitement had now vanished, and the Sabbath quiet ruled everywhere.

Knots of men stood and talked at every corner, but there were no crowds, and no sign of the mob spirit of the previous day.

What work was being done was not open to view. Secret plans were being laid which were destined to cause terrible trouble within the few coming days, but nothing appeared on the surface.

In a second floor room of one building was a group of four or five men. One of them was the person whom Tony had overheard talking to the burglar in the lager beer saloon.

Two others were the two burglars. These fellows had shrewdly made their way into the councils of the agitators.

The others were ill-favored fellows whom no honest man would have cared to trust.

The room in which these men sat was in the rear of the edifice, and overlooking a large yard.

In this yard, at some distance from the window, grew a tree of considerable dimensions.

One limb of this tree brushed the wall of the building, just below the window of the room.

And extended along this limb, like a strange kind of fruit, lay the form of a boy.

From the ground he could hardly be seen. He lay flat on the limb, and was screened in part by the young leaves, then just opening into foliage.

The men inside the room little dreamed that a pair of very sharp ears were within hearing of their conversation. They talked with the utmost freedom, laying their plans of action.

It was Tony Blink who had sought this strange ambush. He had spent the whole day until now on the search for information, and had discovered, by dint of good listening, that trouble was brewing, and that the house in question was one of its head centers.

Prowling round the rear of the building he had been lucky enough to see a face at an upper window which he instantly recognized. It was that of Bill Blazer, the English burglar.

Tony lost no time in acting on the hint. What was that man doing in that room? He wanted to know that badly. And he was bound to find out.

There was the tree, with a branch within three feet of the window. Climbing was an old game with him. He could go up it like a squirrel. And he lost no time in doing so. Within five minutes from the time that Bill had withdrawn from the window Tony was among the branches of the tree.

A few minutes more took him to his lurking place on the limb. Here he disposed himself at full length, clinging firmly with arms and legs, and preparing to use his ears to advantage.

The conversation continued inside. Yet most of the men spoke in a German accent, and with hoarse voices, of which Tony could not make out a word.

The two Englishmen were the only ones whom he could understand, and at first they had but little to say.

Disappointed, the daring boy was on the point of standing upright on the limb, and bringing his head to the level of the window. But some words now came to his ears that changed his intention.

"You bet we're with you," declared the sharp tones of Bill Blazer. "We're in this, finger and toe, Joe and me. We've been trod down, all our lives, by the bloody 'ristocrats, and we'd as li've choke a mill-owner as eat a bit o' bacon. Ain't that so, Joe?"

"I reckon I ain't no baby," growled Joe. "The law of the lamp-post's my law for the chap as treads on me."

Tony could hear a murmur of approval of these sentiments, but he could not make out the broken English of the next speaker.

"Lord, you're right there!" exclaimed Bill. "Dynamite, that's the stuff."

"Got it here?" asked Joe. "There's fun in the wind. It's time to be ready."

A growling voice answered, and then Bill again spoke.

"Reckon as how that's about square. This is jist where the police'll dig if anything turns up. It's sort o' judgmatical to keep the stuff out o' here."

"You have got plenty of bombs ready, you say," remarked Joe. "Where are they? If we're in the game we want to know where to put our hands on them."

Tony strained his ears to catch the reply. But to his disappointment he could not understand a word of the hoarse German accents.

Tony's position was getting uncomfortable. Yet he was bound to hang on while there was a chance of hearing anything of value.

The council, however, only lasted a few minutes longer. The voices had now lowered, and the spy could make out very few words. But he heard the word "dynamite" again, and he knew that something had passed from the chief anarchist into the hands of their new associates.

Then the footsteps of several men were heard, and the closing of a door followed. Other steps approached the window.

Just what to do Tony could not decide. If he attempted to climb down the limb he would be sure to attract attention. Yet to stay where he was might be equally dangerous.

If discovered he could see nothing for it but to let go and fall—taking his chances of a broken leg or neck.

The voices of Bill and Joe again sounded—this time near the window.

"Jolly jackasses them are," said Bill, with a chuckle. "They've sold out their whole caboodle to us, and we're greenies if we don't make something out of it. There's money in this, Joe, fer a pair of light-fingered artists, like you and me."

"Take care how you handle that thing!" cried Joe in alarm. "It's dangerous. I'd fling it out the window, if it was me."

"And blow up the building? That would be a joke," laughed Bill.

"Lay it down, then. You're handling it amazing careless."

Bill appeared to lay something on the window-sill.

"It's an ugly plaything anyhow, dynamite is," he growled, as he turned away.

The steps of the two men could be heard retreating across the room. They continued to talk of the neat way in which they were humbugging their new confederates.

At that instant the tree-limb trembled, a light form rose upright along the wall, and a hand was inserted into the open window.

Then there were faint sounds as of a rapid retreat. The lair which had held Tony knew him no more. He had dropped lightly to a lower limb, and was descending the tree with the agility of a squirrel.

In a minute or two the precious inmates of the room above returned to the window.

A sharp exclamation broke from them simultaneously.

"Blazes and brimstone! the bomb's gone!"

"Hillo! I'm blasted if it ain't shot off without making no noise!"

In mingled astonishment and dread they looked out of the window—but no person was in sight.

It seemed the work of magic. The two villains drew back trembling with terror. There was here a mystery too deep for them to unravel.

In less than half an hour from that time Tony Blink made his appearance at Police Headquarters, with a very important expression on his shrewd young face.

The chief was present—things were just then in too critical a state for him to absent himself from his post.

"Been a-workin'," cried Tony exultantly. "I was brung up not ter work a-Sunday, but when things is as lively as they is now a chap's got ter step a bit over ther line. Yer needn't pay me till ter-morrer, and that'll make the thing square."

"I fancy that I'll not pay you then till you prove that you've earned something," answered the chief coolly. "What brings you here? What pig's nest have you discovered?"

"Can't show you the nest," answered Tony. "But I kin show you one o' the eggs. And I'd 'vise you not to handle it too keerless, ka'se if you break ther shell, there'll be a consid'able scatteration of ther contents."

He drew from under his coat what seemed to be a piece of gas-pipe, of about six inches in length.

This he laid very carefully on the table.

"Jist wait till I git out o' ther room 'fore ye go foolin' with that hard-b'iled rooster's egg," he remarked.

"What foolery is this? What is it?" demanded the chief angrily.

"The chap as I slipped it away from called it a dynamite bomb. Maybe he didn't know; but I've handled it mighty tender."

"The deuce!"

The man near the table drew hastily back, and glanced in sudden dread on the innocent-looking thing that lay before them.

"I stoled it from a pack o' foreign cusses," declared Tony. They was just handin' it to Bill."

Blazer, the burglar, fer a blow-up or somethin.' I reckon as how I've 'arned my day's wages."

"Yes, and a month's wages," declared the chief with energy, as he recovered from his momentary dread. "It's what I've been after these six months. If it's what you say you'll be well paid for your services. If you're playing us a trick, I'll kick you into mince-meat."

"All right," said Tony. "Git out yer tooth-picks. But let me outer this 'fore you go foolin' 'round that egg-shell."

CHAPTER VI.

TONY ON A SCOUT.

On the day succeeding that of Tony's late adventure, Chicago was in a ferment. Trouble had begun; no one could say where it would end. The McCormick Reaper Works had been attacked by a mob, and a sharp fight with the police had taken place. Danger was abroad. Brute force could be dealt with, but the awful danger of dynamite hung like a threat over the city.

The police were sure that abundance of this material was in the hands of the dangerous classes, but they did not know where it was to be found.

Nor were they permitted to take any open action. The authorities were timid, and the police were reduced to underhand measures—the business of spying and scouting.

In this work the boy Tony was engaged. He had been so successful in his former scout that the chief of police regularly engaged him to continue the work. The city was in that state in which the utmost watchfulness was necessary.

Tony, proud of his commission, yet not knowing just what to do or where to begin, wandered through the streets of the excited town.

He found at every corner and before every saloon groups of excited men earnestly discussing the events of the day.

Some of them were Americans, and these were bitter against mob violence, though determined to continue the strike.

Such threats as he heard came from the lips of the foreign element, which seemed dangerously stirred up.

One amusing incident the boy observed as he strolled onward.

A lantern-jawed fellow, a baker, was loudly denouncing the President of the Boss Bakers' Union to a crowd of loafers in a saloon. He did not know that the person thus slandered was standing just behind him until he received a tap on the cheek that sent him sprawling.

A hasty crawl to his feet, one frightened glance into the face of the angry boss, and the scared fellow ran to the door and made a wild jump over the railing for the basement below.

Unluckily for him his trousers caught in one of the spikes of the iron railing. There he hung defenseless, while the boss pummeled him to his heart's content, amid the laughter and jeers of the mob and the yells of the victim.

Tony fairly danced with delight.

"Never see'd so much fun in all my born days," he ejaculated. "But ain't the fight a little bit one-sided? Why don't some o' you fellers unbuckle him and gi'n him a chance?"

The difficulty was at this moment settled by the giving way of the cloth of the pantaloons. They ripped in a wide rent, and down fell the victim into the cellar below, followed by the laughter of the crowd.

"Jolly papers!" cried Tony, walking on. "Guess he's only got his rations. But, lawsee, I don't seem to be makin' no headway. Dunno what I'm to do no more nor the man in the moon."

He paused suddenly in his meditation. Something of importance had met his eye. He was now in the vicinity of the saloon where he had had his first adventure in Chicago, and there, just before him, was the man whom he had most reason to hate and dread in that city, the captain of the gang of burglars, of whose face he had caught the merest glimpse on the occasion of the hanging, but which he would never forget.

He saw more than his. The villain was moving along in a lurking, suspicious manner, as if on some secret and dangerous errand.

As he passed he exchanged glances of secret significance with several persons, and two of these turned and followed him in the same questionable manner.

"Wonder if ther's any game in the wind?" queried Tony. "Thing's smell loud, anyhow. Ther's spiled meat somewhere not fur off, sure."

With the instinct of the scout, he put himself on the track of the lurking conspirators. Young as he was, the boy was shrewd and quick-witted

and he was very sure there was something behind all this mystery.

He followed in a careless manner. It was easy to do. The streets were full of people, moving in all directions, and no one could dream that the idly-strolling boy was acting the spy.

The pursuit continued for several squares. It ended at length at a building adjoining the saloon of which we have spoken. Two of the men indeed entered this saloon. Only the one in whom Tony was specially interested advanced to the other building, and knocked on the door in a peculiar manner.

The door was quickly opened, some words in a low tone passed, then the captain entered, and the door closed.

The house resumed its dark, gloomy and inhospitable look.

Tony seated himself on a fire-plug close by, and fell into a reverie. His eyes were not idle; and he saw several other men come up whom he suspected of being on the same errand as those whom he had followed.

Yet these all entered the saloon. Not one of them proceeded to the adjoining house. This mansion acquired an air of greater mystery to Tony the longer he gazed at it. The shutters were closed, the upper windows tightly curtained, not a ray of light appeared. It seemed to the boy to be a true cavern for the hatching of dark deeds.

He felt a growing desire to explore the gloomy edifice. Who knew what dangerous mysteries it might cover?

Yet only the captain had entered it. The others had gone into the saloon. Were they there yet? That was a point to be decided.

In an instant after reaching this conclusion the active boy sprang to his feet, and sought the yard of the saloon, and the window through which he had made his former observations.

He laughed to himself as he remembered his ravenous hunger on that visit, and the adventures into which it had led him.

"Ain't been so sharp set since, an' hope I won't never be ag'in," he considered. "Seems ter me I struck Chicago jist when things was boomin', and I oughter be kicked if I don't make it pan out somethin' lively."

By this time he had got his eye to the window and was looking within. The room was full of people, and beer and valor were about equally mixed in their talk.

But he saw no faces like those of the men he had observed. He had a quick eye for faces, and could not easily be deceived.

"Wonder if they're up stairs—where I twigged Bill and Joe afore? Anyhow ther's on'y one way ter find out. Reckon the coast's clear, ka'se all the folks o' the house seems to be busy here, pilin' out beer."

He strode boldly back to the kitchen, which he found empty, as he had expected. Through this he walked, into the passage beyond, and up the stairs, without hesitation. Tony was bold and daring enough when it came to the pinch.

But on reaching the head of the stairs he grew cautious. He stood and listened for the sound of voices, but all was silent.

Then he advanced carefully to the door of the room he so well remembered. This door stood a crack open. He peered in. Not a human form was visible. The room was dark and empty.

"Ther's suthin' 'bout this I can't jist git through my brain-pan," he muttered. "What took the cap'n inter t'other house? And where's the sunnies as came this way? I don't ax nobody ter answer more nor one o' these conundrums at once. On'y it looks as if ther's some sleight o' hand contraptions 'bout this queer consarn."

He was on the point of extending his scout through the house, when the opening of a door below, and a step on the stairs, warned him to consider his own safety.

He hastily entered the room, closed the door softly behind him, and proceeded to the window.

The sash of this was raised, and Tony sprang out to the shed, thinking it best to be on the safe side.

The footsteps approached. The door of the room was opened, and a light shone into it.

Tony slipped along the shed, out of range of sight from the window.

He continued for some distance in this direction, fearing some one might approach and look out of the open window.

The shed on which he stood was the kitchen roof, and as he went along he found that it extended to the adjoining building. In fact, after a minute or two, he perceived that he was under a window of the mysterious edifice which had so much attracted his attention.

At once the saloon building lost all interest for the shrewd young scout. The man in whose movements he felt so vital an interest was in this house. Those who entered the saloon had disappeared. Could there be some secret passage from one house to another?

This was the question that rose to Tony's mind, and which he felt a strong desire to have answered.

He laid his hand on the window and tried to raise the sash. It yielded. He pushed it up carefully, and climbed through the open space.

He was within the mysterious building.

All was dark and gloomy about him. The only light was that of the sky entering through the window. He moved cautiously forward, taking care to step noiselessly.

Not a sound came to his ears. Not a glimmer of light was anywhere visible. He would have fancied the house deserted, but that he had seen one man open the door, and another enter.

He now found himself at the foot of one flight of stairs, and at the head of another. Two paths were before him, leading up-stairs and down-stairs. Which should he take?

The question was answered for him in an unmistakable manner. The sound of an opening door came to his ears from above. Then footsteps and voices were heard. They were coming down the stairs.

Fortunately for the spy, these persons had brought no light. They walked through the darkness as if well accustomed to the building.

He crouched back into a nook by the side of the stairs. In a minute more two men passed him. They were too busily talking to be on the alert.

"Then you are sure there is no suspicion?"

"How can there be? The police are trying to smell out dynamite, but they have not dreamed of this place. We are quiet householders, you know."

"Is it all in that back-room closet?"

"Yes. It can be removed in ten minutes, if the alarm is given. But I wouldn't like to be within a safe half-mile of this place if that stuff took a notion to explode. There would be a royal scatteration of timbers."

The speakers were now some distance removed. Their laugh at this last remark was the last sound Tony could distinguish.

But he had learned something of high importance. Should he explore further, or at once inform the police of his valuable discovery?

Tony did not hesitate long about this. He was not the boy to turn back with a job half-done. He wanted to see for himself that dynamite closet. And he fancied that the two men he had heard were the sole inmates of the house. The way seemed clear before him.

He stealthily ascended the stairs. It was not so dark but that he could easily make his way. A few minutes brought him to an upper hall. Here all was still and dark.

He advanced with heedless confidence, groping his way. Soor his hand fell on a closed door, and after a moment's handling he felt the latch knob.

He turned it, and pushed the door open.

We may safely say that there never was a more astonished boy than was Tony Blink at that moment.

For through the open door a flood of light poured out into the hall.

And his astounded and frightened eyes fell on the forms of eight or ten silent and ferocious-looking men, who were glaring on him with an astonishment equal to his own.

"Awful papers! Guess I'll git!" cried Tony, turning to flee.

"A spy! a spy! Seize him!" came from the room.

He had not taken three steps ere he was caught, dragged back into that den of conspiracy, and placed helplessly in the midst of its group of ferocious inmates.

CHAPTER VII.

A BOY IN A HORNETS' NEST.

If it had been Tony Blink's special desire to get into a nest of trouble he could not have succeeded more admirably. How to get out of it again was a point very far from clear.

He looked in a helpless and stupid fashion about the room into which he had been dragged without ceremony.

It was a large apartment, lit with several gas jets. Close curtains at the windows prevented any gleam of light from getting abroad. An air of secrecy seemed to fill the room.

On the chairs ranged round the walls were seated some ten men. They were ill-favored,

fierce-faced fellows, who looked evil enough for any outrage.

Tony, badly scared as he was, recognized some old acquaintances in the party. Bill and Joe, the burglars, were present, together with several of the men he had seen enter the saloon. It was evident that some secret communication existed between the two houses.

At the head of the room sat the man whom Tony believed to be the captain of the gang of burglars, and whom he had tracked to the door of that house. The eyes of this man were fixed on the prisoner with a more deadly and ferocious glare than was shown by any of the others.

The unlucky lad looked slowly round the circle of scowling faces, in search of a ray of hope or pity.

But every brow was as black as a thunder-cloud.

"Why don't yer say somethin'?" he roared at length, in desperation. "What's ther use o' settin' there and makin' faces at a feller?"

"What brings you here?" asked the leader, in his harshest accents. "How did you get here? What do you want here?"

"Dunno how I got yere," answered Tony desperately. "Kinder dropped down, somehow. 'Slong's I ain't wanted, and kin be spared, I reckon I'll git."

He turned toward the door, with a vague idea of making another dash for liberty. But the door was closed and locked, and a stalwart fellow stood beside it, with a surly frown on his face.

"Guess I won't go jist yit, if so be's you can't spare me," muttered Tony, with a look of hopeless resignation.

The leader of the gang looked round the room, as if to take the cue from the faces of his followers.

"It is evident that this fellow is a spy," he said. "The police have run out of men when they set boys to work. Let me hear your verdict, gentlemen. What shall we do with him?"

"Shoot him." "Hang him." "Throttle him," were some of the pleasant suggestions that came to Tony's terrified ears.

"He must not leave this room alive," said another, with a deadly frown.

It was evident that Tony had jumped into a hornets' nest. The very extremity of the danger brought back to him some of his reckless courage.

"Tell yer what to do," he said bluntly.

"What?"

"Choke me ter death on mince-pie. That's better nor wastin' ropes and bullets."

Some of the men laughed at the comical look and speech of the prisoner, and a shred of hope returned to his heart.

"Strawberry short-cake 'll do, if mince-pie ain't handy," he muttered.

"Gentlemen and brothers, this is not business," said the chairman severely. "I am surprised at your lack of dignity. Let the prisoner be removed till we decide on his fate. Wardens, attend to your duty."

Two of the men advanced and took Tony by the arms. He submitted quietly. There was nothing to be gained by resistance.

"Lock him in the rear room," ordered the chairman. "And return here for deliberation."

Tony was led into the hall, and to a room in the rear of the building. Into this he was roughly thrust and the door locked on him.

He stood in the middle of the floor, listening in a dazed manner to the retreating footsteps of his jailers.

Then he began to scratch his head in wild confusion of mind.

Just then he was somewhat slack of ideas, and was only sure of one thing, and that was that he had been the confoundest fool in Chicago.

After a few minutes he began to look around him, and the scattered ideas began to creep back to his brain.

The room was not entirely dark. Some light entered through the window. There was enough to show him one thing—that the window was crossed by iron bars.

"What's that fur?" he asked. "To keep folks in I wonder; or to keep 'em out?"

He remembered the words he had heard in the hall, concerning the contents of the back-room closet.

Was this the room? Was the window barred to keep out intruders? The thing was worth investigating. If he was to be hung he might as well swing for a sheep as a lamb.

Without an instant's hesitation Tony commenced his investigation. There was no trouble in finding the closet. There it was, plain enough.

And on examining it he found to his delight that, though it was locked, the key was in the lock. Evidently it had been opened during the meeting, and in their careless security they had neglected to remove the key.

"Been takin' out some dynamite dumplin's fur lunch, I s'pose; and 'spected to fotch back what they didn't eat of 'em," he jovially remarked, as he unlocked and opened the door.

The closet was empty below. But the upper shelf seemed to contain something, which was closely covered with cloth.

This Tony lost no time in lifting. His eyes stared as if they would start from his head when he saw what it concealed.

"Bu'sters! jist as sure as huckleberries!" he ejaculated. "And 'nough on 'em ter blow up half Chicago."

The shelf contained a store of what seemed to be dynamite bombs, several of them being pieces of gas-pipe, like the one he had before captured. Others were round balls of iron or lead, of various sizes.

There was no doubt in Tony's mind what these were. He had seen and heard enough to convince him.

He picked up two of the smaller leaden balls. There was a hole in each, into which there had been fitted a projecting plug.

There was no question in the boy's mind as to their contents.

At this point Tony's investigation was brought to an end by the sound of advancing footsteps without.

He hastily dropped the cloth, removed the chair on which he had stood, and locked the closet door.

This was barely done when the door of the room was thrown open, and the two men who had led him there reappeared.

Up to this moment Tony had been too busy to take time to think. But as he obeyed the orders of his jailers and quietly followed them out into the hall, his young brain was busy in considering the situation.

Who were the men he had seen? What was the purpose of their meeting? For what object had they stored up the perilous stuff in that closet?

That three of them were members of a gang of burglars he well knew. But there was a different look in the faces of the others. They seemed more like frantic enthusiasts than criminals.

The boy, young as he was, was quick at putting this and that together. He had heard enough about the labor troubles in the city, and seen enough of the foreign anarchists, to know that these men belonged to that class.

He was not long in deciding that the burglars were working these fellows for their own ends. The captain of the gang had evidently made himself prominent among the anarchists, and was stirring them up to violence in order that he and his men might take advantage of it to commit some daring burglaries.

"He's goin' ter skeer the folks out o' the'r senses with dynamite, and then dig in fur snacks. That's the little game he's a-workin'," reflected Tony. "And I s'pose they're cogitatin' ter put this coon out o' the'r way 'kaze he knows too much. But you bet they don't!"

There was a grin on the boy's face as these thoughts passed through his mind, which showed that there was some sort of an idea playing through his brain. He evidently scented fun in the wind.

The room into which Tony was now ushered had undergone some ominous changes since he had left it. The walls were now draped in black, the lights burned dimly, the inmates were standing in a wide semicircle, with masked faces.

The leader confronted Tony, with his eyes glaring savagely through the holes in the black mask that concealed his countenance.

"Brothers of the mystic circle, what shall be the fate of this foolhardy youth, who has come among us as a spy of the capitalists?"

"Death!" came the answer, in their deepest tones.

Tony faced them with unflinching countenance. He evidently was not in the humor to be scared.

"You have heard," said the leader, ominously. "What have you to say that this sentence shall not be executed on you?"

"Don't s'pose ther's no use blowin'," answered Tony, defiantly. "Ain't much ter live fur in this here Chicago, anyhow. I reckon you kin go ahead. It's your circus jist now."

The conspirators seemed puzzled by this unexpected defiance. They looked at the boy in wonder. This was not the cringing and begging for life that they had expected.

The leader drew a pistol from his pocket, cocked it, and presented it at Tony's head.

"You seem to think this is a joke," he said. "You will find out that we are fully in earnest. Your life is forfeited, and can be granted to you only on one condition."

"What's that?" demanded Tony.

"That you tell all you know, and become our spy on the police. Who has sent you here? What were your instructions? How was this place discovered? You know much for one of your age. Tell us what you know."

"And I kin go clear then?"

"Yes."

"Swear it."

"We swear."

"Then let me git up on the cheer back here. I allers like ter be on the platform when I'm goin' ter make a speech."

The conspirators were evidently puzzled at the boy's manner. Such behavior in a mere imp of the street was very different from what they had expected. Their semi-circular line was broken, and Tony passed through and mounted a chair in the front end of the room.

"Now, boy, it is your last chance for life," declared the leader severely. "You are to tell the truth, and the whole truth—understand? If you attempt to lie or play a trick on us, you die on the instant. Proceed."

He raised his pistol and pointed it threateningly at Tony's head.

"Ther ain't no gum game 'bout yer lettin' me off arter I've emptied my bag?"

"We are men of our word."

"You lie," answered the boy with the greatest coolness. "It's your game ter squeeze me fu'st and kill me arter. I ain't no blind jackass, nary time. But as long's you want ter hear the truth, I ain't afeard to tell it. In the fu'st place I want ter tell these here gentlemen that they're consortin' with a bloody burglar, that's a-work-in' them fur his own game."

"Dry up, you rat!" yelled the leader, springing hotly forward.

"Next thing I've got ter say," roared Tony, "is the following: 'Tain't safe ter lock up a coon o' my size in a room full o' dynamite. What I've got ter remark is in mighty short meter. If the whole caboodle of yer don't slide outer this here room quicker'n a cat kin wink her tail, ther'll be the liveliest time round these diggin's ye ever heered tell on! An' I mean every word on 't. Drop that there pistol, and git!"

"Git's the word!" he repeated, holding up both arms to their full length.

Each hand held one of the leaden dynamite bombs, which the shrewd gamin' had concealed about his person.

"Slide now!" yelled Tony, with the laugh of a young demon. "I've been through yer closet in 'other room, and if I drop these here playthings, lawsee won't there be a bu'stin' old time!"

The gang of conspirators had not waited for the end of this harangue. At the first sight of the boy, standing aloft like an avenging spirit with those terrible weapons in his hands, the whole party had rushed for the door with yells of terror.

They knew, much better than he, what effect would follow if those bombs were flung on the floor. The building would have been blown into the street, and every man present torn into fragments.

Ere Tony's speech was finished the room was empty, and he could hear his late assailants tumbling in their haste down the stairs.

With a wild laugh of triumph the victorious boy sprung from the chair, and rushed after the fugitives, increasing their terror by his howls and screams of laughter.

They had good reason to be terrified, for the reckless imp of mischief was half inclined to fling his missiles down the stairs after them, and risk the consequences.

He had a very vague idea of the real danger of dynamite, and only that he wanted to carry his bombs to the police station, he would have been very likely to make a trial of their effect.

As it was he contented himself with yells and threats.

In less than an hour afterward Tony made his appearance at the district police station, told his story to the lieutenant in charge, and showed his prizes.

The lieutenant was at first incredulous of the boy's story. It seemed more like romance than reality. Yet there were the bombs. They were no phantoms.

He questioned the boy shrewdly, but Tony kept close to his story.

"You never see'd a chap in sich a tight hole take things so cool," he said. "Speck I'd howled

and whimpered like a stuck porker only I knowed I had the game in my own hands. I was b'ilin' over with fun inside while them coons was tryin' to skeer me."

Finally the lieutenant gave orders for a search of the house, and a party, led by Tony, went there for that purpose.

They were too late. The conspirators had recovered from their alarm, and removed the evidence of their guilt. The closet was empty. Every vestige of its dangerous contents had vanished.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BURSTING OF THE BOMB.

If ever a boy was busy that boy was Tony Blink, the bright young gamin of Chicago. He had dropped into clover, so far as his fancy was concerned, and he relished the excitement of the city with the spirit of a born adventurer.

During the days which had passed since the coming in of the month of May the city had been in a dangerous ferment. The great eight-hour strike, the attack on the Reaper works, the discovery of concealed dynamite, and the general incendiary talk, had produced a feeling of dread and uncertainty.

The anarchist element was busy, making threatening speeches, and trying to stir up the spirit of mob violence.

And on the preceding day two incidents had occurred which were not calculated to quiet the public pulse. The drinking saloon which Tony had so much reason to remember had been attacked and torn out by a mob, all its liquors being swallowed or set on tap.

And a drug store in the vicinity had been assailed and every bottle in it broken, the druggist and his family escaping with difficulty.

Just why these places had been thus dealt with no one very well knew. Some rumor concerned with Tony's late adventure had roused suspicion of treachery and a spirit of destruction in the worst element of the city population.

The police had done their best to put an end to these disturbances, and had succeeded, with great difficulty.

Some other events had occurred in which Tony was more interested, though they were lost sight of in the labor excitement. Several burglaries had been committed on the night of the assaults just described, advantage being taken of the general disturbance.

"Things is gettin' mighty jolly," declared Tony, as he strolled along the streets, which were full of people, all engaged in earnest conversation. "Didn't never calkerlate ther' could be so much fun b'iled down and bottled up. No use talkin', Tony, but you dropped on your feet when you came to this town."

He thrust his hands into his pockets and stirred up their contents. There was a silvery jingle that made very pleasant music to his ears. He had never had his pockets so well-lined before.

"The way them fellers promenaded outer that there room was a caution to circus performers," he said to himself, with a laugh of enjoyment. "Wouldn't that big burglar like ter git hold o' me ag'in'. But he ain't goin' to if this chicken's got any say. I've giv' him two chances now, and that's enough."

"Reckon I won't jine the dynamiters," he considered, as he strolled onward. "They're kinder too sociable. Make themselves a leetle too much at home, them chaps do. But them bombs is mighty nice things to have when a fellar's in a tight hole, and don't see no way out."

It was now the evening of Tuesday, the Fourth of May. The city during the day had been comparatively quiet, but the police were everywhere on the alert. Mischief was in the air, and no one could tell what new troubles the future might yield.

Tony Blink was not the least active of the police scouts. His wit and readiness had attracted the attention of the chief, and he was regularly employed as an agent for the detection of the burglars. His knowledge of the faces of these fellows made his services of value.

Tony kept on his devious way until he unexpectedly found himself in the midst of an excited throng. At a short distance before him, in an open space, a public meeting of some kind seemed going on. Speakers were on a stand in the midst of the crowd, and from their manner they seemed half-frantic with excitement.

Tony, with boy-like curiosity, pushed in until he found the crowd to be too dense for him to make his way through it.

He could hear the voices of the speakers, but their addresses seemed to be in some foreign

language. Edging out again, he made his way up to a squad of police, who were quietly looking on.

"Why ain't yer doin' somethin'?" he demanded querulously. "They're gittin' b'ilin' hot in there. They'll b'ile over soon, mind I tell you, if you don't take the lid off the pot, and fling some cold water on the fire."

The sergeant, who had recognized Tony, smiled as he answered:

"That's my notion, too; but we're waiting for orders. Word has been sent to Headquarters, and reinforcements will soon be on hand."

"You'll want 'em. Them chaps is warmin' up, an' gettin' wild as hornets. Oughtn't to never been 'lowed ter come together. That's my 'pinion of the biz."

"Mine, too," answered the sergeant briefly.

As he spoke the sound of an advancing wagon was heard. It drove up in a minute or two, filled with policemen, who leaped to the ground.

It was quickly followed by other patrol wagons, and the force of officers rapidly increased, until fully two hundred were on the ground.

The crowd was every moment growing more turbulent. Men were gathered in all the shadowy side-courts and alleys, who thrust themselves against the small body of policemen.

This force had now gathered into a compact mass, ranged in military column. They had drawn their clubs, and were ready for action at the word of command.

It was evidently the time for it, if they did not wish the riotous spirit of the mob to get beyond control.

The captain in command advanced a step, and in a loud voice ordered the mob to disperse.

Tony, who stood close by, clapped his hands in impish delight.

"That's the ticket for soup!" he exclaimed. "If they don't make tracks now there'll be ructions."

"Disperse, I say!" the officer repeated, in stern tones. "I give you but a minute. If you are not gone in that time we will charge on you."

"We've got as much right here as you," retorted a burly fellow.

"Don't you dare touch us," roared another. "The streets are free."

"If you are wise men, you will disperse while your skins are whole," retorted the captain. "Be ready, lads, for the word."

The sturdy policemen behind him closed up their ranks more firmly, and grasped their clubs with more bitter determination. They meant work—short, sharp and decisive.

They little dreamed of the terrible intentions of some of the men before them, or of the fate in store for many of them.

But at that moment of suspense, while they waited in silence for the order to act, there came, from a point near the speaker's stand, a small object flying in a curve through the air.

It had been flung with a sure aim, for it fell in the very midst of the police, and between two of their ranks.

As it struck the ground it exploded with a terrific roar.

Instantaneously a scene of terror and bloodshed occurred, seldom surpassed in the history of violence.

It was a dynamite bomb which had fallen.

The street was torn up as though by a heavy blast of gunpowder. The murderous fragments of the bomb flew in all directions, rending through the close ranks of the police as if they had been swept by a battery of artillery at short range.

Men were fairly mown down in swaths, their bodies horribly torn and rent, blood spouting as from a crimson fountain, fragments of human flesh hurled far over the panic-stricken crowd.

In that dire instant some thirty men fell, three of them killed outright, many others terribly torn and mangled.

The confusion and terror in the ranks of the police was equalled in the throng, most of whom were astounded by this deed of violence. After a moment's wavering hesitation there was a wild surge backward, in a frantic effort to escape.

No man knew but that others of those death-dealing bombs might follow, and a frightful carnival of murder whirl all in its crimson folds.

But the ranks of the police remained broken scarcely a minute. Then the brave fellows rallied, swept past their dead and dying comrades, and charged the mob with drawn revolvers.

The time for clubs had passed. Battle to the death was declared, and battle to the death it was to be.

On they pressed, in serried ranks, firing volley after volley at point-blank range.

The crowd broke and fled in the wildest terror, men falling on every side before the hail-storm of bullets.

It was a scene not soon to be forgotten. Those dimly-lighted streets! On one side the howling and disordered mob, on the other the silent and close-ranked police! The incessant spiteful crack, crack, crack of revolver-shots! The rapid fall of men, like autumn leaves before a gale! The screams of agony, the groans of deadly pain, the flow of the crimson tide of life! It was enough to make the most heartless shudder, and the boldest fly for life.

Some few scattering shots were returned, but the mob dispersed with frantic haste. Down every street they fled, and through all the dark and narrow alleys of the vicinity, steadily followed by the police until not the vestige of a rioter remained.

Then the officers returned to the scene of battle.

A veritable scene of battle it was. Many a conflict which has lived in historic fame has shown less frightful results.

The whole space was thickly strewn with the dead and dying, while from the less desperately wounded a distressing chorus of groans and screams went up into the air of that fatal night.

The fallen policemen were first looked after, and of these thirty-two were found, killed and wounded, many of them frightfully torn and mangled by the jagged fragments of the terrible bomb.

After they had been cared for, the victims of the revolver fire were looked after.

Many of these had been removed by their friends, but more than fifty still lay stretched upon the ground. These were picked up and taken to the station-houses.

Terrible as had been the effect of the dynamite bomb, the police had more than revenged their slaughtered brethren.

"Who is this?" cried one of the officers, as he took hold of the arm of a small figure. "Here's a boy among them. And I guess he has got his quietus."

"By Heaven, it is that little imp of a Tony! Poor devil, I hope he is not killed! He must have caught one of our bullets," answered the sergeant.

But at this moment Tony, who had been lifted to his feet, opened his eyes, looked round him with a dazed aspect, and scratched his head in a confused manner.

"Whar's my hat?" he demanded. "What coon's stole my hat?"

"He isn't dead, at any rate," laughed the sergeant.

"Well, I rayther reckon not. But I've got a buzzin' in my ears as if a whole hive of bees had settled inside my brain-pan. And I guess somebody's been rubbin' a red-hot iron 'cross the top o' my head," remarked Tony. "What's busted, anyhow? I jist remember hearin' a roar like a blowed-up locomotive."

An examination showed what had happened to Tony. A fragment of the bomb had grazed the top of his skull, stunning him for the time, but leaving him as sound as a new dollar.

"Lucky 'tain't no wuss," declared the philosophic boy. "Only it's kind o' squally to lose my new hat. An' it fitted me, too, like shoe-maker's wax on a nigger's heel."

By this time the ground was cleared of the more dreadful evidences of the combat, though the crimson marks remained to affright hundreds of wondering eyes on the next day.

The city was widely picketed with police, to prevent any new outbreak of the riotous spirit, and Chicago sunk into an unquiet slumber.

CHAPTER IX.

TONY ON A SCOUT.

THE day after the riot dawned. Chicago was in that state of terror which falls upon a city which has been shaken by an earthquake, and fears its return at any minute.

The wiser element of the population knew well that the outrage of the day before was the work of a few desperate men only, and that the great body of artisans, foreign as well as American, were as shocked and horrified as any person in the city could be.

Yet the police would not permit the least group of men to assemble, and started a sharp investigation to discover the ringleaders in the dreadful work of the previous evening.

Who had thrown the bomb? Nobody knew. That terrible deed was as yet shrouded in utter mystery.

There was another event of that night of terror which now came to the notice of the police

authorities. The gang of burglars had taken advantage of the prevailing terror and confusion and absence of the police from their usual routes.

A banker's office had been entered, the safe broken open, and money to the amount of ten thousand dollars had disappeared. This event was only known to the police. It was deemed expedient, for good reasons, to keep it out of the newspapers.

At Police Headquarters doubt and indecision prevailed. Work had crowded upon them, but it was work in the dark. Where to strike they knew not, and the mystery baffled and perplexed them.

"The rioters are enough to deal with, without this confounded burglary," declared the chief, spitefully.

"What'll you gi'n me if I cotch them burglars?" asked Tony, who had wormed himself into the chief's room.

He had recovered his lost hat and now wore it, though a jagged rent had been made in the crown by the fragment of the bomb. Tony was proud of it as a trophy of the battle. It showed that he had been through fire.

"You!" queried the chief.

"Nobody shorter nor this chicken," answered Tony, unabashed. "Yer needn't gi'n me nothin' if I don't fotch 'em."

"All right, youngster. It is a bargain. The banker offers a thousand dollars' reward. It is yours if you discover the burglars."

"I dunno as I kin, an' I dunno as I can't," rejoined Tony. "I've got a notion 'bout as big as a huckleberry. Dunno whether it'll shrivel up to nothin', or swell till it's as big as a rhinoceros."

"I wish you could put us on the track of the man that threw the bomb," said the chief, in a musing tone. "That would be worth a couple of thousand more."

"I ain't got no notion there. But I kin try, like other chaps."

Tony sauntered from the office, after receiving an injunction of absolute secrecy from the chief.

He had his work before him, and with promise of more money if he succeeded than he had ever dreamed of owning.

He had but a slight clew. Yet he had overheard the plans of the gang of burglars to use the work of the rioters as a cover for their own business and he was very sure that he knew who had the banker's money.

But where to find them. That was the question. He had not caught a glimpse of any of them since his dynamite adventure.

Had they been satisfied with their plunder, and left the city?

Tony did not believe so. He did not think they were the kind to be satisfied with one raid.

"I'm a-goin' fur 'em, anyhow, now you bet!" he declared. "And I'm a-goin' fur dynamite. And I'm a-goin' fur that ugly dog as flung the bomb. I mought find somethin', an' I mought find nothin'; but I kin try. I've heern that's the on'y way folks can git to Heaven—by tryin'."

Just what to do, however, was not so clear. He had no idea what had become of the burglars; but he knew their faces, and he knew they were in league with the dynamiters. Those were points of value.

His only plan was to wander about through the suspected districts and keep his eyes and ears open.

No one would suspect him of being a police spy, and they might talk freely in his presence where they would be very cautious in the presence of a stranger.

"On'y I'm a good bit too spruce," considered the boy, looking down on his dress. "Got ter git into older duds nor these, or they'll swear I'm a 'ristocrat, an' bu'st my b'iler, maybe."

His first move, then, was to get a suit of clothes suitable to his new plans. He achieved this by trading clothes with a bootblack of about his own size, taking his box and brushes to boot.

Tony kept his hat, however. That was ragged enough to suit all purposes, and he was too proud of it to part with it.

Then, browning his face and hands with dirt, training some stray locks of his hair through the openings in his head-gear, and flinging the bootblack's box over his shoulder, the young spy was fully equipped for his work. No one who had seen him before would know him now, and no one would be likely to suspect his purpose.

Thus equipped, he made his way toward the dangerous districts.

He did not neglect business, however, on the way. He was smart enough to go the whole

hog when he went into a new vocation, and he was a quarter of a dollar richer by his honest labor at shoe-blackening by the time he reached his ground.

"It don't pay bad," he said, with satisfaction. "On'y as I've got bigger contracks, I mought stay in this biz."

During these evolutions several days had passed, and the city had recovered somewhat from its panic. Arrests continued to be made, but none of them was of importance. No trace of the bomb-thrower had yet been discovered.

Some more dynamite had been found. Yet, taking it all together, the police were very much at sea.

Tony's detective work had meanwhile continued, but with no show of success.

"Didn't 'spect ter strike 'ile the fu'st well I sunk," he grumbled. "Got ter keep at it. If it takes me a week to fotch signs o' the lubricator it'll pay, I reckon."

In fact nearly a week passed without a sign of oil. He had not seen the face of any of the burglars, nor of any of the men in whom he was just now interested.

Yet Tony did not despair. He had plenty of perseverance, and he plied his vocation of boot-black as industriously as if he had not another thought in the world.

"Awful thunder and blue blazes, why don't somebody somewhere turn up somethin'!" he growled, after a week of vain labor. "On'y I'm makin' enough by the brush ter git my grub I'm afeard I'd play out."

He was interrupted by a call from the door of a drinking saloon which he was passing.

"Hillo, boots! Come here and give me a shine up."

Tony looked up into the face of the speaker. He recognized him at a glance. It was one of the men from whom he had snatched the plate of meat on his first entrance to Chicago.

The man as quickly recognized him. He broke into a loud laugh.

"I know you, you blamed street rat. I caught a twig of your phiz that night you stole our lunch. Come now, you've got to answer for yourself."

He caught Tony by the arm.

"I was a'most starvin'," answered Tony, with a doleful aspect. "That was afore I got inter biz. And I heerd you say as swop was the law. So I swopped."

The man looked into the boy's quizzical face, and then he burst out in a now laugh.

"You're no fool, you young rascal. Well, come in, and black my boots, and we'll call it square."

Nothing loth Tony obeyed. He remembered that this man had been a loud-mouthed socialist. Yet the boy was sharp enough to suspect him of having some other chestnuts in the fire. There was a lead here which he might do well to follow.

Tony blacked his pair of very dirty shoes.

"Now I reckon we're square," he averred.

"We'll call that polish a receipt in full," answered the customer.

"Then can't yer git me a plate o' lunch? Ther's some on the bar, an' I got a holler spot inside me yit."

The man laughed and good-naturedly obeyed, setting before the boy some bread and meat, well covered with mustard.

The latter stuff brought tears to his eyes. But he eat slowly on, gulping down the hot morsel as best he could.

His customer saw what was the matter, and stood laughing at him.

"It kind of kindles a fire inside you, don't it, youngster? You haven't got your throat brass lined, like a Dutchman."

"I've tasted cooler grub," rejoined Tony.

As he spoke he observed a man who had just entered the saloon, and whose face had in it something familiar. He passed onward, making an almost imperceptible sign as he did so.

He went through an inner door. Two minutes afterward Tony's customer followed.

"That smells like it," muttered the boy.

"Secret Service goin' on there."

But it was impossible for him to trace it any further at present. He finished his lunch and left the saloon.

But he did not go far away from its door. His blacking-box served him as a convenient seat, and in a few minutes he seemed to be fast asleep in a nook between two houses.

About an hour afterward the two men left the saloon together. They walked along the street, busily conversing.

The apparently sleeping bootblack quickly became wide awake, and he had business in the same direction.

The two men led Tony something of a long dance. Finally they entered another drinking-saloon, in one of the very worst quarters of Chicago.

Tony crept up and gazed into the window. As he did so he almost leaped for joy. He had caught sight of the face of Bill Blazer, seated at a table within.

CHAPTER X.

A CRIB TO BE CRACKED.

THE window was closed with a curtain, which came down to within an inch of the sill. But this was just the thing to enable the boy to see without being seen.

The table occupied by the burglar was just under this window, and Tony observed that he had been joined by the two men who had just entered.

There were a few other persons in the room, but they were near the bar, and at a distance from the men at the table.

The latter conversed in a low tone, as if they did not wish to be overheard.

All this the sharp-witted boy observed at a single glance.

He then lowered himself from his perch. He had seen enough. Now he wanted to hear. It was not safe to have the glitter of his bright eyes in the light of the saloon lamps.

Standing on his box, and resting against the house, he seemed solely occupied in watching the people who were passing along the street.

But scarcely a word of the low-toned conversation within was lost to his keen ears.

For some time nothing of importance was said. The men were talking of the riot, and of the activity of the police, in general terms.

Their conversation soon sunk into lower tones, and the listener found it no easy matter to distinguish their words.

"That was a cute job done by those burglars," said the man whose shoes Tony had blacked. "They have raked in all the money there is in this business. A good ten thousand."

Bill broke into a low laugh.

"They ain't slouches, them fellows," he averred. "We cut the hay and they harvest it."

Tony's ears opened wide as the conversation turned on this interesting subject. How did these two men know about the burglary? It had been kept a secret between the banker and the police. They must have been concerned in it, and had adopted this manner of talking to enable them to speak of it with safety.

Such, at least, was the conclusion to which the young spy came.

"They ain't been corked up tight 'nough," he said to himself. "They're b'ilin' over 'bout that burglary, and ain't got sense 'nough to hold the'r tongues. If they ain't my game then I don't know beans."

The voices of the three men now sunk almost to a whisper, and only an occasional word or phrase could be made out by the eager listener.

"Corner Center avenue and Eighteenth street," came in Bill Blazer's tones. "Sharp eleven to-night."

"Good spot," answered another. "Bound to be a crowd there to hide in."

Other words were spoken, in still lower tones. Some secret communication of importance seemed to be passing between the three men.

Tony screwed his ear close to the window-sill, and listened intently, but in vain. To his disappointment he could not make out what was said.

"It's a neat crib," came at length, in tones that just reached Tony's ears. The other customers of the saloon had gone out, and less caution was now observed by the speakers.

"If we crack it we'll have to keep shady for awhile."

"Best keep shady now," whispered another. "That beer-slinger has his eyes turned this way."

Again their words became indistinguishable.

"The cap'n," were the next words Tony made out, in Bill Blazer's tones. "Best drop in on him fur 'structions."

"Ay, ay," came the answer, in a louder voice.

The tones of the men now became distinguishable, but the subject of their conversation was changed to more general topics.

After some time the man who had been directed to call on the captain for instructions rose, and stretched himself with a loud yawn.

"I must be off home to bed," he declared.

"I did not get two hours' sleep last night, and must make up for lost time."

"All right, my cove," was Tony's comment.

"Only I'm kinder curious to see where you bunk. Guess I'll have ter leave Bill Blazer fur

a while, till I'm done givin' you my special 'tention."

When the man left the saloon, several minutes afterward, he gazed around him in a cautious and wary manner.

But there was nothing dubious to be seen. There was no reason to suspect the ragged boy, who was perched on a fire-plug across the street, whistling as if he was as happy as a lord.

The conspirator walked away in a seemingly unconcerned manner, though with sudden glances backward now and then that forced Tony to be keenly on the alert.

The young spy had got rid of his box, and made his way under the shadows of the houses, in a lurking fashion, at a considerable distance behind his prey, though never losing sight of him.

This went on through a number of streets. The man in advance was evidently very wary, but he never once caught sight of his sly pursuer.

His watchfulness was on general principles. If he had had any reason to fear a spy the boy would have had a harder job of it.

As it was he managed without difficulty to keep on the track.

This continued for half an hour. Then the man stopped before the door of a small cottage that stood a little back from the street. He hesitated a moment, took a last wary look backward, and then opened the door and entered.

Within two minutes afterward, the spy had gained a position in a shady covert opposite this house, and was examining it in a way that impressed its every detail upon his mind. He would not forget it easily.

For an hour Tony kept in his lair. He could see lights moving about the house. They ascended to an upper room, of which the curtain was at once pulled down. But the spy had time to catch a glimpse of the forms of two men, one of whom looked like the person he had followed.

At the end of his vigil the man he had followed again left the house. Tony once more put himself on his track, and traced him to a dwelling in a more respectable portion of the city.

But he was very sure that the first house was the one in which he was specially interested.

The evening was advancing, but before seeking his own quarters, the active boy made his way back to the drinking-saloon. He was not done yet with Bill Blazer.

A look into the window showed him that Bill was no longer there. Satisfied that he had finished his day's work, the industrious spy went home and to bed.

At eleven o'clock the next night Tony Blink was on hand at the locality mentioned in the conversation of the previous evening, at Center avenue and Eighteenth street.

As has been said in that conversation, this place was occupied by a crowd of people, among whom night-hawks of any breed might easily hide themselves with little fear of discovery.

It was the locality of a prominent headquarters of the agitators who had made things so hot in Chicago during the last few days, and the crowd had been drawn here by curiosity.

The conversation turned mainly on the slaughter of the police by the bomb, and it was easy to see that the people present were bitterly opposed to such bloodthirsty acts.

The throng was made up of honest mechanics, strong friends of law and order, and unflinchingly hostile to all deeds of anarchy. The dynamiters had vanished. Chicago was just then no safe place for anarchist sentiments.

But Tony took little interest in the conversation of the groups of men around him. He had other objects in view. A considerable part of that day he had spent on guard near the cottage to which he had tracked his prey on the previous night. And his watch had not been quite fruitless. He had learned something of importance.

It was his purpose now to discover the scheme of the burglars who had made this locality their place of rendezvous.

Working his way cautiously through the crowd, who seemed too deeply interested and excited to think of going home to bed, he kept his eyes in keen play. Every face around him was closely scrutinized. Finally his sharp gaze fell on a well-known countenance. It was that of Bill Blazer, who, with his hands in his pocket and a pipe in his mouth, was leaning carelessly against a lamp-post.

Tony fell back. He did not want to be seen by the burglar, but determined not to lose sight of him.

For ten minutes he rested in a doorway, intently watching Bill. Several persons passed,

and began to lounge about the locality, casting knowing looks toward Bill, but not speaking to him.

More than one of these faces Tony recognized. He was satisfied that the gang of burglars was assembling, under cover of the crowd, and that they had some important scheme of robbery in view.

Finally another person came up and lounged past, making signals to the various members of the gang as he did so.

They followed him in a careless manner. Tony slipped cautiously along the edge of the houses, keeping within the shadows.

He was eager to hear any word that might pass between them, while careful to avoid coming under their eyes. Too many of them knew him to make this a safe process.

He was disappointed in his expectations. Brief communications passed between the burglars, but not a word reached his ears. He had hoped to learn the locality of the intended burglary and put the police on the track. In this design he was foiled, and nothing was left but to seek to follow the men before him.

The gang kept together scarcely a minute. They then separated and strolled away in various directions. It was evident that they had met there for orders only, and that their next point of meeting would be the scene of their burglarious work.

As it was impossible to follow them all, the shrewd youngster put himself on the track of Bill Blazer. He had before observed that Bill was not very cautious in his movements, and considered him the safest game to follow.

Lurking in the shadows of the houses, darting across all open spaces, crouching occasionally in a deep doorway or in the entrance of an alley, Tony prosecuted his scout, while Bill walked briskly onward, with only an occasional glance of vigilance behind him.

The route pursued by him was a long one. It led at length to the thickly built-up region of the city near the lakeside, a locality of scattered houses and open lots.

At one of these houses Bill stopped. Without hesitation he opened the door and entered, vanishing from the eyes of the scout.

"Dunno what sort of a dodge this is," growled Tony, discontentedly. "Them coves talked 'bout crackin' a crib, but this biz looks as if Bill was goin' home fur a snooze. Mought be arter his tools, though. Reckon I'd best sneak round the shanty so's to keep an eye front and back."

This was easy to do, as the house stood alone. Nor was the boy a moment too soon. To his surprise and delight he saw Bill leaving the house by the rear and making his way over an open lot. In his hand was a small parcel, which he, the next minute, concealed under his coat.

"Burglars' tools," remarked Tony. "Reckon I'm on the right track now."

He put himself again on the trail of the burglar.

CHAPTER XI.

TONY'S NIGHT'S WORK.

It was considerably past one o'clock that night when Tony found himself in the region of the most active business portion of the city, to which point he had tracked the unconscious burglar.

The night was a dark one, and a drizzling rain had begun to fall. Of the crowd which had filled many of the streets till as late as eleven o'clock scarcely a person was to be seen.

Some few late wayfarers appeared, here and there, with the occasional form of a policeman. But of the latter very few were visible. The bulk of the force were yet on special duty, at threatened points, and the ordinary patrolmen were few and far between.

It was this circumstance that the burglars were taking advantage of. They knew well the unprotected points, and it was against one of these that their present enterprise was projected.

The street in which Tony now found himself was one of the city's financial centers, a locality in which much money changed hands daily.

Not a soul was to be observed when Bill Blazer reached the situation. He walked onward to a dimly-lighted portion of the street, where he paused and looked around him for an instant, and then gave a low whistle.

Crouched behind a high stone doorstep at some distance back was the diminutive form of Tony Blink, only his eyes lifted above the level of the step.

To his surprise the whistle seemed to make the street alive. A half-dozen men suddenly

came into view, from where he could scarcely guess.

The group collected and some words seemed to pass between them. Tony could see that they were pointing to a stone-fronted building before them.

Their conference was quickly at an end. Two of the men vanished again into the shadows, as if on guard duty.

The others advanced to the door of the building before them.

From Tony's situation he could not distinguish their movements very clearly, but a glint of bright steel came to his eyes, and there were low metallic sounds.

They were evidently seeking to force open the door, with the aid of strong burglar's tools.

"Got 'em treed. Now the next thing's to bag 'em," soliloquized the youthful scout. "Nobody can't say as I haven't worked this dodge mighty cute, and I'd like ter nab all them chaps myself and pass 'em inter the perlice office. But that's a job ahead o' my weight. I can't carry this game no further 'thout help from Headquarters. And I've got ter be lively 'bout it."

Turning, he wormed himself away from this point of observation, crawling along the pavement until a safe distance was reached. He then rose to his feet and, still keeping within the shadows, quickly reached a crossing street, into which he plunged.

He was now beyond the vision of the burglars, and hurried away, chuckling to himself at the success of his scheme.

"They ain't goin' to work that crib in nobody's five minutes," he muttered. "S'pect all the money's in an iron safe, that's got ter be busted open 'fore they kin salt the plunder. An' it takes time to waltz through them safe doors. I reckon I kin fotch down the cops time 'nough ter spile ther little circus."

Fifteen minutes' rapid movement brought the active scout to the place he was seeking, the nearest police station. He hastily entered. A body of officers were seated within, while a ready harnessed patrol-wagon stood at the door. They were evidently prepared for any possible trouble.

"Who are you, youngster? What brings you here at this time o' night?" asked one of the men harshly.

"I reckon I'm on biz," retorted Tony. "I want ter see the lieutenant."

The officer asked for appeared at that moment. He knew the boy scout and asked him his business in a more gentle tone.

"Ain't yer got a private room, lieutenant?" asked Tony. "I've got somethin' big in my bag, and I don't feel like emptyin' it out per-miscuous."

"Come in here, then."

He led the way to an inner office.

"Now, youngster, empty your bag. Let me see the size of its contents."

"You bet I will. And spry, too. There ain't no time ter be lost."

Tony proceeded to relate, in as few words as possible, the important discovery he had made. The lieutenant listened with deep interest, questioning him here and there, until he had gained a proper comprehension of the whole affair.

"You're sure there's no blunder about this, my lad?"

"Nary blunder," answered Tony, positively. "But ther mought be if you stop to ax too many questions. I left them fellers diggin' in-lively."

The lieutenant sprung up at this, went to the door of the outer room, and called out briskly:

"Make yourselves ready, men. Six or eight of you will be required. Arm yourselves, and bring handcuffs. They may be needed. I will go with you."

"It isn't a riot?" asked one of the men, examining his pistol.

"No, a burglary. Be quick."

He reappeared from his office within a minute, selected a half-dozen of the officers, and led the way to the patrol wagon outside.

Under Tony's directions this was rapidly driven to the vicinity of the street in which the burglary was being committed.

On reaching a point beyond which the sound of the wheels might have given the alarm, the wagon was stopped, and the men sprung to the pavement. Tony now described the exact locality of the burglary, and the men separated into two groups, shaping their course so as to enter the street at points above and below the locality of the crime.

All appeared deathly still when they came upon the scene. Not a soul was visible, and not a sound could be heard. The lieutenant looked at Tony with a momentary doubt.

"They're inside, or else they've got through and mizzled," muttered the guide.

Leaving the men at the cross-street the lieutenant cautiously advanced to reconnoiter. He had not gone many steps ere a sharp alarm-whistle rung upon the air. He had been seen and recognized.

At the instant there came a startling sound from the building to which Tony had traced the burglars, a dull roar, as of an explosion whose sound had been muffled.

This was evidence enough to satisfy the lieutenant.

"On them, lads!" he cried. "Clubs or pistols, if necessary! They must not escape!"

At these words the two groups of officers sprung into the open street, and ran with all haste toward the direction of the explosion.

As they approached the building around whose door Tony had observed the burglars, this door was flung violently open, and a party of men rushed out.

They found themselves corraled by the police. The burglars left on guard duty had vanished, after their alarm-whistle. The others sprung savagely forward.

For a moment it looked as if they might break through the opposing line. But the crack of a pistol rung on the air, and one of them fell with a ball in his leg. Club in hand the officers sprung on the others.

A sharp fight followed, the one side using clubs; the other, burglars' tools.

One of the policemen went down, with a cracked crown. His assailant fell at the same instant, by a blow from an officer's club.

Of the two remaining burglars, one of them darted on the lieutenant, felled him with a blow of his fist, and darted away at full speed. A bullet followed him, but it only seemed to add wings to his speed.

The remaining burglar was grappled by a sturdy officer, and a severe struggle for the mastery succeeded. It ended through the aid of one of the second group of officers, who quickly mastered and handcuffed the struggling man.

Meanwhile a sharp exclamation from Tony had sent an officer in hasty pursuit of the flying burglar.

"That chap's the cap'n," he cried. "Nail him! Don't let him slide!"

Slide he did, however. He soon gave his pursuer the slip, and vanished into the night. Three prisoners remained as trophies of the fight. Three of the burglars had escaped. These were Bill Blazer, Joe and the captain.

On examining the scene of the attempted robbery, it was found that the door of the building had been broken open, and the broker's office to which it led was a scene of confusion.

An effort had been made to blow open the safe, the explosion they had heard having broken the lock. But for the prompt advent of the officers the object of the burglars would soon have been accomplished.

Some loose money had been taken, but the loss was very slight. The shrewdness and activity of the boy scout had saved the broker from a heavy loss.

"Hought to hand you something handsome for this, Tony," declared the lieutenant. "If he don't, he will hear my opinion of mean men."

"And he might find out what my notion is 'bout double-jointed roosters," answered Tony.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAPTAIN SHOWS FIGHT.

ON the day following that of the raid on the burglars, three stout, resolute-faced men, in citizen's dress, walked westward on Ambrose street, Chicago.

There was a regularity in their walk, and an erect, soldierly bearing, which spoke of men accustomed to military drill, while their faces were those of persons ready for any emergency.

They conversed on indifferent subjects as they advanced, and gave no evidence of any special object in view. Yet they did not lose sight of a youthful figure some short distance before them.

This was a slouching, ragged bootblack, though he seemed a very old-looking boy for the business.

The hour was just half-past twelve.

Finally the bootblack stopped before a low cottage building, with a fence and a yard in front.

Here he seated himself on his box, and looked coolly around him. There was nothing to show that he had any connection with the two men.

Yet these stopped also, exchanged significant

glances, and looked at the boy, who gave a meaning nod.

The men entered the yard. One of them walked up the front steps and stationed himself at the street door.

The others walked round to the rear, and one of them rapped sharply on the door. The other lurked behind the house corner.

The rain was falling severely. It ran dripping from coat and hat of the visitor, when a woman opened the door in response to his knock.

"Who is there?" she asked.

"A friend, who wishes to see Mr. Kline."

"He is not at home. But I expect him every moment. Won't you come in?"

The visitor obeyed.

"A rainy day, this," he said, to a person who was seated in the room.

This was a strongly-built, hard-faced man, dressed in dark, well-worn garments, who sat watching the rain through the window.

He eyed the visitor sharply, but for the moment did not respond to his remark.

The visitor sat in a nonchalant attitude without speaking further.

"Who are you looking for?" asked the man, in a German accent, and with an uneasy manner.

"For Mr. Kline," answered the visitor, as he rose from his seat. "But if you are Louis Martin, you will do just as well."

The man rose to his feet, and fixed his eyes on the speaker somewhat sternly and suspiciously.

"What do you want with Louis Martin?" he demanded.

"If you are the man, as I see you are, the pleasure of your company is desired at the station-house, and I am sent to bring you the invitation."

He rose as he spoke and advanced on Martin, but ere he had taken two steps the latter drew a ponderous navy revolver, cocked the murderous-looking weapon, and leveled its thirteen inches of barrel at the disguised officer.

"Stop where you are now, my man!" he cried, savagely. "Another step, and you go under!"

He placed his finger on the trigger and took deliberate aim.

It was a critical moment, and called for decisive action. With the agility of a cat the officer sprung upon his assailant, and a life-and-death struggle began.

Martin fought furiously, but the unexpected movement of the officer had taken him at a disadvantage. The pistol was discharged, but the bullet went astray.

Down to the floor they fell, desperately struggling, rolling over and over, upsetting chairs and tables, and shaking the whole house with their efforts.

Catching the officer's thumb in his mouth, the desperate fellow nearly bit it off.

At this moment there came a loud crash from the front. The door was burst open, and the second officer dashed in out of the rain to the assistance of his comrade. The man from the rear made his appearance at the same instant.

The sight of this reinforcement showed Martin that he had been thoroughly entrapped. Suddenly clutching the revolver by the barrel, he tore it from the grasp of his antagonist, and dealt the latter a blow in the forehead that seemed to stun him.

The next moment Martin was on his feet and making a dash for the stairway of the building. The other officers sprung for him.

One of them was stopped by the woman, who had been screaming loudly during the fight, and who managed now to stumble in the officer's way.

But the remaining officer cut the fugitive off from the stair, brandishing a policeman's club as he sprung agilely in his front.

Martin turned with the agility of a cat and leaped for the window. The second officer, who had been impeded by the woman, now pushed forward with such impatience as to hurl her to the floor and run over her.

He grasped Martin by the shoulder just as the latter flung up the sash and was about to leap out.

"Hold up, my friend Martin, or Jackson, which I fancy is your right name," he ejaculated, drawing a revolver. "Don't be in such haste. We have business with you in another direction."

He did not know the man he had to deal with. The fugitive had seemingly yielded to the strong grasp upon his shoulder, and stood for an instant as if he had given up the effort to escape.

But the next moment he swung round upon

his heel with lightning-like agility, knocked up the pistol hand of the officer with a slight movement of the elbow, and at the same instant planted his fist with a hard blow between the eyes of his surprised captor.

Down went the latter in a heap on the floor, as suddenly and heavily as if he had been kicked by a mule. The pistol was discharged as he fell, but its bullet went wide astray, smashing one of the upper panes in the window.

One swift glance behind taught the fugitive the situation of his remaining foes, one of whom had just risen from the floor, while the other was advancing upon him from the stairway with upraised club.

The events here described had taken place in seconds, though it needs minutes to tell them.

"Good-by," yelled the desperate criminal. "You did not set your nets right for this fish."

As he spoke he sprung from the floor, and with the leap of a leopard went through the open window. He had successfully coped with three stalwart opponents, and it looked as if he would escape from them all.

Yet he had one more enemy to deal with.

As he lit upon the ground outside he went down in a crouching attitude from the force of the fall.

Ere he could recover, the form of the bootblack stood beside him, his box lifted in both hands, while with all his strength he brought it down on the head of the fugitive.

The bottom burst from the box with the force of the blow, and it went down over Jackson's head to his shoulders, cutting one of his ears as it descended, and tearing it into a bleeding rent.

Simultaneously Tony leaped upon him, caught him around the arms from behind, and yelled to the officers:

"Be lively 'bout it. I've got him; but I mought as well try to hold a mad bull."

Jackson, indeed, was on his feet again, had released one arm from Tony's grasp, and had seized the boy by the collar, jerking at him with the strength of a giant.

Tony held on with a death grip, still yelling. At the same moment one of the officers sprung through the window, and a second ran outward through the door.

"I've got him!" screamed Tony. "Or he's got me; dunno which."

In an instant more the officers had the hampered fugitive by the arms. With a skillful wrench they brought his hands together, and slipped a pair of handcuffs over his wrists.

"You can give in, Jackson," remarked one of the captors. "We've got you, and we intend to take you in. But I'll swear I didn't think there was so much fight in you."

"Fight!" cried Tony, who had now released the captive, and stood grinning before him. "Why, he's wuss than ten tom-cats. He's got grip 'nough in him to make a pair o' millstones."

"You screechin' young devil!" hissed the prisoner savagely. "I'd have been off but for you, blast your dirty carcass! I'll murder you yet, you tiger's cat!"

"You've tried it twice a'ready, cap'n," answered Tony. "You tried it fust time with a rope round my neck, and it didn't choke wuth a cent. You tried it next time with a pistol, and it didn't go off. This is the third time, and I reckon it's my innings now."

The captain scowled savagely, but said nothing further. The English language was incapable, just then, of expressing his feelings.

"Tell yer what, gentlemen," resumed Tony. "you've got the right pig by the ears. This is the chap that them burglars called cap'n. Know him like a breeze, I do. And it's kinder likely that little bit o' plunder as was took from the banker's office is hid somewhere 'bout this shanty."

A knowing smile came upon the prisoner's lips as he heard these words.

"I hope you'll find it," he muttered.

"We'll search for it, at any rate," answered one of the officers, sharply. "Take him in, Harry. Yonder comes a patrolman who will help you. We will remain and search the house before that imp of a woman can have time to work."

Tony remained with the party of search, while the prisoner was removed. But the smile upon his face clearly indicated the result. The search was thorough, yet not a trace of concealed spoil was found.

It had been expected to discover burglars' tools or other evidences of criminality, but the house proved perfectly innocent of all such articles.

No direct evidence was found to connect the prisoner with the recent burglaries. There was

nothing against him except Tony's testimony, and the fact that he was known to the police as a slippery character.

Where was the plunder? That was the point next to be decided. Two of the burglars were yet at large. Were the spoils of the burglary in their hands? Here was detective work cut out ahead for the police force of Chicago.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW TONY NAILED THE PLUNDER.

"You have done your duty nobly, my boy," remarked the chief to Tony. "The law must decide whether Jackson is the man we want or not. But at any rate he is a dangerous character, who needs to be made an example of."

"He come mighty near makin' a 'zample o' that perliceman," answered Tony. "My stars, but you oughter seen him fight! It was wuss than six cats and a bull dog."

"He is safe enough now, at any rate. Now, Tony, I have some words to say about those burglars. Do you understand that this affair is to be kept secret? Not a whisper of it must get abroad. The man who was robbed wants his money. But he wants silence also."

"I'm right there," answered Tony. "I ain't goin' to blab. Don't know nobody much in this here town, and when I talk to myself I don't do it out loud."

"That's my idea exactly. You know the faces of the two burglars who are still at large. If you can put me on their track you will not be left to whistle for your reward."

In five minutes afterward Tony was again on the street, full of his mission, concerning which he had received full instructions.

"Wonder what he wants it kept mum fur?" soliloquized the boy. "Calkerlate he must be in a ticklish place. 'Feard his creditors will settle down on him if they hearn tell he's been robbed. Anyhow ther's no danger o' this hoss blabbin'. I know what side o' my bread's got the butter on it."

The shrewd boy was not without an idea, and he had been sharp enough to keep his idea to himself. In his story to the police authorities he had taken care not to tell anything he knew. In his description of how he had followed Bill Blazer he had said nothing about the burglar having stopped at a house on the way.

That was a bit of information which he judged it wise to keep to himself, for future use.

"Don't want ter set all the detectives in Chicago gunnin' round fur Bill Blazer and that plunder," he soliloquized. "Them thousand dollars' reward ain't goin' to be flung inter the street, fur every beggar to grab fur. I'm a-goin' fur them there spondulicks, plum from the shoulder."

Not many hours elapsed ere Tony found himself in the vicinity of the house in question. He was not very sure of its exact position, and it took him some time to locate it. He finally hit upon a house which appeared to him to be the one wanted, though some doubt yet remained upon his mind. More than one edifice in that locality stood alone, and in his haste on his previous visit he had not got the points very firmly fixed in his mind.

Having decided on his house, the next thing was to discover whether he was right or wrong in his decision.

He began to watch the edifice as a cat watches a mouse. The May nights were chilly, but the boy was well seasoned, and he spent more than one night bunking out on the ground in the rear of the house.

As nothing came from this the impatient scout adopted a new scheme.

"Want yer basket carried, ma'am? Looks sorter heavy." These words were addressed to a woman who was leaving a market-house, with both hands well laden with her purchases.

"That's a fact, boy," she answered the ragged speaker. "What will you carry it for?"

"A bite o' breakfass," answered Tony. "Say a beefsteak, done rare, and some fried 'taters. And I wouldn't go back on buckwheat cakes and 'lasses."

"Well, you are moderate," laughed the woman. "I'm afraid you will make an expensive boarder. But take the basket. I will hunt you up a bite of something."

"Don't put in no pound cake nor ice cream," remarked Tony, as he shouldered the heavy basket. "Them things allers make me sick."

"I am glad you told me," rejoined the woman, with a smile of amusement. "I will take care you are not made sick."

Tony trudged on by her side, talking away in a comical vein that kept her in a high state of good-humor.

The young rascal had gained one point. This was the woman of the house to which he believed he had tracked Bill Blazer. He was going to see the inside of that establishment.

Five minutes afterward found him seated at the kitchen table of said house, slowly demolishing the cold meat and bread and butter which the good-natured hostess had set before him.

"Them's prime," declared Tony. "Better nor yer fancy fixin's. Guess you don't live here all alone, ma'am, judgin' by the pile o' grub you've jist fotched in."

"Alone? Mercy, no! I have some boarders, boy. I'd be sorry to live alone."

The good lady was loquacious, that was evident. And if she wanted to talk, Tony was just the boy that wanted to be talked to. He kept his tongue going like a pump-handle, fetching water at every stroke.

He learned that she had a husband at work in the city, and three boarders. One of these was a young lady. The others were two gentlemen, Mr. Montague and Mr. Page.

"B'en with you long?" asked Tony.

"Only about two weeks. 'Mr. Page is an invalid. He was ordered by the doctor to come to Chicago for his health. Mr. Montague is taking care of him, and never goes out, except maybe for an evening walk, or to the drug store for medicine."

"Dear me, but ain't that interestin'!" averred Tony. "Guess I'll go now, Mrs. Brown. Come ter see you ag'in if you'll promise not ter stuff me full o' pound cake."

In fact the boy was somewhat disappointed. This story of an invalid and his nurse rather threw cold water on his search for the burglars. He was too young at the business to know all the tricks of gentlemen of that class, and fancied that he must be on the wrong track.

At this moment there came a man's step in the hall. The kitchen door opened, and a voice spoke.

"If anybody calls, Mrs. Brown, please tell them I'll be home in an hour."

"Certainly, Mr. Montague," answered the willing hostess. "How is poor Mr. Page this morning?"

"Poorly. Very poorly. I must see the doctor about him."

"Poor dear soul. I do hope he'll pick up soon."

Tony had his back to the door. But the sound of that voice gave him a start. What was Mr. Montague doing with Bill Blazer's voice? That was queer. He slightly changed his mind about the looks of things.

"Yes, ma'am. I guess I'll go now," he remarked, after the door had closed. "Much 'bliged. Allers like ter carry baskets fur good-lookin' ladies like you."

"None of that nonsense," she answered with a pleased laugh.

"You are good-lookin', an' good-hearted, too, or you wouldn't be so kind ter this Mr. Page. What did yer say ailed him? Rheumatiz, or fever an' ager?"

These words opened another conversation. By the time it ended Tony knew all about the gentlemen boarders—what room they occupied, what were their habits, what money they seemed to have, and the like.

At ten o'clock that night he was back in the vicinity of the house. He had not lost sight of it for many minutes at a time, yet he had made certain arrangements of importance for the success of his scheme. Had the burglar recognized him in the kitchen? That was what troubled Tony. He did not want his prey to give him the slip.

Scaling the fence with the agility of a cat, he stood in the yard of the dwelling. There were lights still about the house. He waited patiently till these should be extinguished.

The room occupied by the supposed sick gentleman and his friend was on the second floor back. That much Tony had learned. Its window looked out upon the roof of the one-story kitchen.

It might have been chosen for that reason, thought the boy. Birds of that kind always like more than one way out from their nest.

But Tony had another object in view. The kitchen roof was a way in as well as a way out. He had, in fact, come provided with a short rope-ladder, with hooks at its upper end.

This, with the aid of a clothes prop, he succeeded in hooking into the lower edge of the roof, pulling on it till the sharp irons were securely fixed.

"That's all sweet and lovely," he muttered. "Don't nobody say as I don't know beans; 'cause they mought be mistaken. Now the next thing's to shin it."

To reach the shed by the rope-ladder was but a minute's work. Up the roof he climbed cautiously, stretched at full length, and worming his way over the shingles. A few minutes brought him under the window.

It proved to be raised several inches at the bottom. The curtain was drawn down close. Yet he perceived that a gas-jet was burning within.

He found, however, that it was impossible to see what was passing in that chamber. But he could hear, and that was the next thing of importance.

It was evident that the occupants of the room were yet up, and were moving cautiously about, as if they did not wish to be heard by the other people of the house.

No word was spoken, but Tony could perceive that something was going on.

Was the other burglar really sick, and Billy nursing him? Or was this all a blind to hide other purposes? This was the next thing to find out.

Their stealthy movements continued for some ten minutes, the silent listener growing more and more impatient.

At the end of that time the sounds ceased, except a slight shuffling noise near the window, which seemed to indicate that the occupants had seated themselves.

"That's all, Bill. And 'tain't no fool of a job to pack all that plunder in a six-by-nine sachel."

The voice was low and cautious, but so near the window that the listener outside did not lose a word.

"Sure it's all in?"

"Well, I should smile. S'pose I don't know how to pack swag?"

"When it comes to bonds and greenbacks every one counts, you know."

"I reckon I do. I wish I was as sure that you're not on a wrong lay. We're so neatly fixed here that I don't want to run away from a shadow."

"Do you s'pose I don't know how to use my eyes?" retorted Bill. "I twigged that young imp at sight. Why, he had on the hat that was tore by the bomb. He's on our track, I tell you. And he's conniving with the police. There's nothing for us but to make a run."

"You are sure he did not trail you to our next quarters?"

"As sure as I am that the sun will rise to-morrow."

"You have been running about too much, Bill. We must keep close and shady after this, and slide from Chicago as soon as the hunt slacks up."

"You bet! Let's slip down now and spy the situation. The rascal may have shadowed the house with police scouts a'ready. If there's any bad sign front we must take the back track."

"And this valise?"

"Leave it here till we've took a squint. It won't walk off without legs."

This conversation had been conducted in tones not much above a whisper.

But the speakers were seated immediately beside the window, and there was a pair of very sharp ears directly on the other side of the curtain. Very few words escaped the listening boy.

"Hunky dory," he said to himself. "If I ain't hit the nail squar' on the head this time, then a cat don't like milk. If I'd put it off an hour longer them coons 'd 'a' slid. You bet I've salted 'em prime."

The speakers had risen and were walking cautiously across the room. The door opened with a scarcely perceptible sound, and then closed.

Tony waited for two or three minutes. All was deathly still. It seemed certain that both had left the room.

He carefully raised a corner of the curtain, and looked in.

No person was visible. The burning gas threw its light into every nook and cranny.

On the floor, in the center of the room lay a small leather grip-sack. There was some other baggage, but Tony's interest was settled on this alone. He had heard enough to know what it signified.

It was no time now for hesitation.

He sprang lightly through the open window, ran to the sachel, and snatched it from the floor.

It was heavy for its size.

Satisfied that he had gained the prize for which he had ventured so much, Tony hastened back to the window.

Less than a minute had passed between the time of his entrance and exit.

He hurried down the shed.

He had nearly reached its lower extremity

when there came the sound of a violent oath from the room he had just left.

The curtain was roughly torn aside, and a still fiercer oath succeeded.

At the same instant the sharp crack of a pistol-shot rung loudly on the night air, and Tony's hat was torn from his head and hurled into the yard below.

It was no time now to think of rope ladders. A flying leap took him to the ground. He snatched up his hat, which had been pierced by a pistol ball, and sprung for the yard gate.

A second ball pierced the wood just as he flung the gate open and rushed out.

A policeman ran up to him.

"Who is firing? Have you nailed them?"

"They've pretty nigh nailed me. They're in that shanty, sure. Pass the word to the lads, and go fur 'em. I've got my work in, and it's my game ter slide."

Away went Tony with his plunder, leaving the police and the burglars to settle the balance of the affair in their own way.

CHAPTER XIV.

TONY BRINGS IN THE PLUNDER.

SOME of the affairs which we have described in the preceding chapters are matters of history.

But not all of them. The newspapers, which try to get hold of everything of interest, do not always succeed. The Police Department is not entirely open in its operations. It has its Secret Service, and the adventures of Tony Blink belong to that Secret Service Department.

If the Chicago chief of police were asked about Tony and his doings he would probably put on an air of surprise, and declare that he had never heard of such a person.

And if he were investigated about the burglary he would declare that nothing of the kind had ever taken place.

He knows his business too well to destroy the usefulness of his young detective, whom he expects to employ on other work.

And when he is requested to keep quiet about a robbery or other crime, a steam-pump could not draw any information out of him.

Fortunately we have private sources of information, or we would not have been able to tell the story of Tony Blink, the wide-awake young police spy of Chicago.

And we must request our readers not to speak too freely about Tony and his ways, for he is still in the Chicago Secret Service, and we do not wish to put the dangerous classes on their guard against him.

This much we may say, that the burglars who were arrested are yet in prison awaiting their trial.

But the trial of Bill Blazer and Joe Plump for burglary is not likely to come off soon for they are still at large.

And this brings us back to the point at which our last chapter ended, with Tony dashing away like a deer with his plunder.

As his concluding words showed he had not been alone in his raid on the burglars.

He had warned the authorities, and about the time of his return to the house a squad of officers had made their appearance. These were stationed on guard near the house, while the boy pursued his investigation.

But they had to deal with old birds, that were not to be easily caught.

In fact, when the burglars had left the room in search of danger signs, their first glance from the front door showed them two men standing in attitudes of ease, one in each direction from the door.

This was enough for the acute fellows. They smelled danger in the wind, and hastened back to their room, Bill drawing his pistol as he went.

"That swag's worth fightin' for," he said grimly. "If them's shadows, I'll see if a pistol ball won't go through a shadow."

They reached the room just in time to see Tony leap from the window, with their precious sack of plunder in his grasp.

What followed was but natural. The furious oaths and the pistol-shots only showed their opinion of the situation.

"After the imp!" cried Joe in a wild fury. "Run him down! If anybody tries to stop us down goes his house!"

Tony had barely passed through the gate when his two pursuers were on the roof, and flying down it with hasty strides.

As they emerged from the yard, the policeman to whom Tony had spoken ran forward to

intercept them, signaling to his comrades at the same time.

The burglars attempted to dodge him, but he wheeled sharply round, and dealt a swinging blow at Joe with his club. The alert villain evaded the stroke by a hasty stoop.

Ere the officer could recover from the effect of his effort, Bill was upon him. A stunning blow from the stock of the pistol fell upon his forehead. Down he went like an ox struck by an ax.

"There goes the imp!" cried Bill. "And here come the police! After him, Joe. I'll play with them."

Joe darted swiftly after Tony, while Bill turned and faced the two officers who were running briskly up from opposite directions.

The daring burglar retreated step by step, threatening them with his cocked revolver.

They hung back dubiously.

This check to their progress gave Joe and Tony a chance to get a good distance in advance.

The policemen, however, were not the sort of men to long stand this state of affairs. They drew their weapons and fired simultaneously—but more to give the alarm than to hurt the fugitive.

Bill fired back, and with more deadly intention. One of the officers went to the ground, with a bullet hole in his shoulder.

At the same moment the shrewd burglar darted down a dark alley, whose entrance he had just then reached.

Other officers came up at the moment. One of them called to the man who had been felled by Bill's blow, and who was just rising to his feet.

"Look after Tom. He's got it hard. We will run the fellow down."

But they promised more than they had the power to perform.

The escaped burglar knew his ground thoroughly, and wound his way through streets, courts and alleys, baffling his pursuers with his quick turns.

But if he was not to be easily caught neither was Tony. The boy quickly found that he was being pursued. He was spry enough in his movements, but he had a weight to carry, and the man behind him was spurred on by avarice and revenge.

Tony was not long in making up his mind what to do.

He turned short down a narrow street to his left. Here an alley, closed by a gate, ran between each pair of houses. He had not gone far before he perceived that one of these gates stood a crack open.

A quick movement took the boy through it. In an instant he had closed and bolted the gate; but quick as he was, Joe was already in the street, and had caught sight of the cunning maneuver.

He ran up and threw his weight, in fury, against the gate. It resisted his efforts.

He looked upward. The gate was about seven feet in height. Springing up, he caught the top with his hands, drew himself up, and in less than a minute was on its top. He let himself down as quickly on the other side.

Running back through the alley, he found himself in the yard of a house surrounded on three sides by a fence. In the rear fence was a second gate, which stood partly open.

Through the gate he dashed, satisfied that Tony had preceded him, and had left it open in his haste.

But Tony knew a trick worth two of that. He had opened the gate, but had not gone through it.

Hardly had the burglar disappeared ere the shrewd boy rose from behind an ash-barrel in the corner, and ran nimbly down the narrow alley to the street he had just left.

"Got ter catch yer fox 'fore you kin cut off his tail," said the boy, with deep satisfaction.

He jogged along easily, breathing himself after his late severe exertions. He was too easy, as it proved. A sudden exclamation of surprise came to his ears. Looking up hastily he saw, not twenty feet from him, a form which he recognized at a glance.

It was the well-known figure of Bill Blazer, who, in his flight from the police, had chanced to come directly on the young custodian of the treasure!

"You blamed young imp! You've slipped Joe, have you? I bet high you don't slip me!"

Tony did not wait to hear the conclusion of these words before he was in full flight again. With an oath of deep intent Bill was after him.

It looked for the moment as if the boy would be run down inside of a few minutes' chase. Yet he had one advantage. His pursuer had been

running at full speed, without a moment's pause, since he left the house. Tony had taken a breathing spell, after throwing Joe off his track, and was partly fresh again.

And he was nimble as a young squirrel. At first Bill seemed to gain on him, but it soon appeared that Tony was drawing away from his panting pursuer.

"Blast yer eyes!" yelled Bill, in a rage. "I'll fetch yer carcass!"

He paused, took deliberate aim with a revolver at the flying boy, and fired.

The bullet cut a furrow in Tony's neck, but did no serious damage. A second bullet flew wide of the mark.

It was the last effort of the burglars. The next instant Tony dashed down a side street, where he made such progress as to quickly distance his exhausted pursuer.

Not long afterward he appeared at the Central Police Station. There was nobody present but the officers on night duty.

He left his prize with the sergeant.

"Take mighty good keer o' that till mornin'," he said. "Tain't the kind o' stuff I like to keep in my headquarters. I'll toddle round in the mornin' ter have a chat with the chief. You bet, old feller, ther's been some jolly jokes goin' on to-night."

Tony jogged away, as proud of his exploit as if he had just been crowned King of Great Britain.

The opening of the sachel the next day proved that the boy had been completely successful.

All the bonds stolen from the banker were within it. Of the cash, about two hundred dollars were missing. The remainder was all there.

The search of the baggage left behind by the burglars at their late residence confirmed Tony's story.

It contained a fine set of burglars' tools, neatly made of the best steel, some of the implements being exceedingly efficient and powerful.

But as for the burglars themselves they had made their escape. No trace of them could be found, and though their description was given to the whole detective and police corps the next day, it proved useless. The sly fellows had taken to cover, and were not to be unearthed.

"They said as they had new quarters laid out," said Tony. "Howsomdever I don't keer. I got the swag, an' that's all I went for. 'Cept ther reward. You bet I ain't goin' to let up on that, nary time."

Tony got his reward. But, what pleased him still more, he was regularly installed by the chief as one of the Secret Service agents of the police, at a good salary, and promise of plentiful work.

"But I have one thing to say to you, my boy, and I want you to bear it well in mind," remarked the chief. "You are only of use to me while nobody knows you are in my service. On the day that you let it be known that you are a police spy, that day your service ends. You can be bootblack, newspaper boy, apprentice, tramp, whatever you will. You may have to take on many vocations. But the day your tongue gets too lively for your wits on that day you are out of my employment. Do you understand?"

"If I didn't I oughter be pickled down for a fool," returned Tony. "A chap as couldn't take in plain talk like that wouldn't be fit ter carry salt mackerel to a boardin' house, let alone play detective. If I don't hold my tongue you kin nail my two ears to the two nearest lamp-posts. Now what's in the wind? That's what I want to know. Jist lay me out a job so's I won't git rusty waitin'."

"There is nothing in view for you just at present, except to keep an eye open for those burglars. They may still be in Chicago, or they may have left it. We have the most of the gang in prison, but we want the others if they are to be taken. That is your job for the present. If any other work turns up suitable to your size I will use you, don't fear for that."

"Guv me plenty o' grub and spondulicks and I won't grumble," rejoined Tony. "I'm jist the easiest chicken to satisfy as you ever see'd. But, I ain't 'feard o' work, nary time, and it seems to me as if I'm cut out fur this sort of business. Dunno as I kin salt down Bill Blazer and Joe Plump, but I kin try, and George Washington couldn't do no more."

At this writing the two burglars are still at large. Tony has not yet succeeded in tracing them. But he has been on some other lively lays for the Chicago police authorities, and is fast gaining reputation as the boy scout of the Secret Service.

THE END.

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